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ABSTRACT

The 27 articles in this 6-part guide provide information on developing and implementing writing instruction as part of content-area courses in two-year vocational-technical colleges. Part One, General Concerns, includes "Making Writing Work for You in the Interactive Classroom" (Killingsworth, Rude); "Evaluating and Responding to Student Writing" (Harris); and "Reinforcing the Scheme of Things: Using Word Processors in Writing across the Curriculum" (Barker). Part Two, Balancing World-of-Work Writing and Writing-as-Learning Assignments, contains "Learning Business through Writing" (Midkiff-Kennedy); "Writing to Revitalize Child Development Courses" (Marshall); "From Visualization to Communication: Writing in an Interior Design Course" (Farnan); and "A Medical-Surgical Nursing Class Participates in Writing across the Curriculum" (Aguilar). Contents of Part Three, Writing to Learn, are "Clinical Journal for Nursing Students" (Johnson); "Writing in Agricultural Marketing" (Schacht); "Writing-Intensive Course in Automotive Engine Repair" (Barnes); "Using Journals to Enhance Learning in Unarmed Defense Tactics" (Nichols); "Enhancing a Course in Office Procedures: Writing Assignments" (Leiker); and "Writing to Learn How to Teach in a Dental Hygiene Program" (Chacon, Whiteman). In Part Four, Writing to Accomplish Professional Goals, are "Writing-Intensive Course in Fashion Promotion" (Berthelsen); "Communications in High Technology" (Reid); "Writing-Intensive Course in Advertising" (Twomey); "Venture Plans for Management Students" (Moore); "Writing for the Real World: A Resume Writing Course for Vocational-Technical Students" (Halbert); and "(W)rites of Passage: Writing in the Public Administrative Careers Program" (Soliz). Writing Assignments and Course Plans, Part Five, includes "One Step at a Time: Composition in the Typing Class" (Aldana); "Writing-Intensive Course in Respiratory Care" (Bitsche); "Writing-Intensive Course in Basic Accounting II" (Watt); "Managerial Writing: A Skill as Important as Any Other Management Function" (Walker); "Writing and Organizational Behavior" (West); and "Progressions: Writing to Increase Skills in Fashion Merchandising" (Winstead). The last section, Writing across the Curriculum--Preparing Teachers and Students, contains "Writing across the Curriculum as a Challenge in Faculty Development" (DeArmond) and "Writing across the Curriculum and the Student in the Two-Year College" (Robinson). (SK)

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Designing Writing Assignments for Vocational-Technical Courses

A Guide for Teachers in the Two-Year College and Technical Institute

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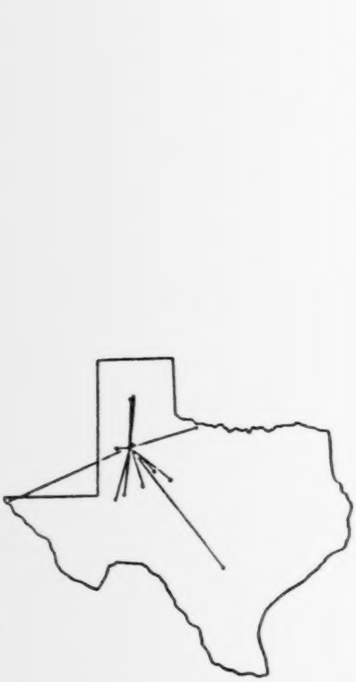

The West Texas Project in Writing across the Curriculum
Lubbock, Texas
1988

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A Guide for Teachers in the Two-Year College and Technical Institute

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Introduction

The West Texas Project in Writing across the Curriculum

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The growth of the writing-across-the-curriculum movement during recent years has been phenomenal, and the impact of the movement on everyday teaching and learning has been equally great. The movement began in relatively small liberal arts colleges where the faculty were committed to providing excellent, well-rounded education for all students regardless of their major. The movement proved successful in so many of those schools that it has spread to become established in virtually every kind of post-secondary institution, from small, rural colleges to comprehensive, urban universities to junior colleges and community colleges throughout the nation. We are now witnessing a similar expansion of writing across the curriculum from liberal arts and professional programs into vocational-technical programs.

The success of the movement can be attributed to many factors, but its vitality rests primarily on its two main objectives. One, which probably comes to mind first for newcomers to the movement, is the requirement that students practice verbalizing their observations, perceptions, and responses, organizing their ideas, and expressing them clearly to others. This major objective helps students achieve excellence in writing by taking them beyond the level of competency they gain in their required freshman English courses. Students improve as writers when they must write frequently in all classes and have their writing critiqued by professionals in their field of study.

The second main objective of the movement is to use writing as a way to help students learn new information. All of us who have done much writing know the insights gained from writing that help us clarify our own thinking and which then gets fed back into our work and our writing. This use of writing as a way of learning has become the most vital aspect of writing across the curriculum: when writing is added to the learning process, students learn better than they do when using only reading and studying.

Both of these aspects—learning to write and writing to learn—were also the major objectives from the beginning of the West Texas Project in Writing across the Curriculum, which was funded by two one-year grants for faculty development from the Coordinating Board of the Texas College and University System. The grants, which were for the academic years 1986-1987 and 1987-1988, came primarily from part of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Educational Funds allocated to the state of Texas for improving, renewing, revising, and developing post-secondary technical and vocational programs and services. Additional support came from Texas Tech University.

The major activities of the 1986-1987 grant were these:

- A series of seminars on how to use writing in content areas was presented at 13 two-year institutions from early October 1986 to early February 1987. Over 250 vocational-technical faculty attended these seminars.

- Follow-up activities to the seminars consisted of (1) a survey of writing practices in vocational-technical courses at the 13 institutions that was responded to by 70 faculty and (2) submission of formal plans for writing-intensive courses during the Spring 1987 semester by 40 faculty.
- A two-day workshop for project participants was conducted on the Texas Tech University campus on June 5-6, 1987, in which over 40 faculty participated.
- Final reports on the implementation of writing-intensive courses in vocational-technical curricula were submitted by 20 faculty as partial fulfillment for undergraduate or graduate credit at Texas Tech University in August 1987.

The major activities of the 1987-1988 grant were these:

- "Centers of Excellence" in writing across the curriculum were established at three institutions—El Paso Community College, San Antonio College, and South Plains College–Lubbock.
- Project staff led seminars and informal meetings to support "grassroots" growth of writing across the curriculum at the participating institutions.
- Twenty-four vocational-technical faculty from 8 two-year institutions joined the project as teacher-consultants, who, with advisement from project staff and co-workers, developed, implemented, and reported on activities in writing-intensive courses.
- The project staff gathered and edited these reports in consultation with the teacher-consultants and wrote supporting documents to create a sourcebook on teaching writing-intensive courses in vocational and technical programs in two-year colleges and technical institutes.

The resulting sourcebook is this book, *Designing Writing Assignments for Vocational-Technical Courses: A Guide for Teachers in the Two -Year College and Technical Institute*, which is a coming together and sharing of experiences and knowledge by specialists in many fields who instituted writing-intensive courses as part of their participation in the West Texas Project in Writing across the Curriculum. Taken together, the 27 articles written especially for this book by the project participants are the most comprehensive description of writing across the curriculum in vocational and technical education to date.

If one characteristic of writing across the curriculum that is manifested in this book is to be singled out, it would be the transformation of the social and learning context of the classroom. In general, the teacher changes from an authoritative, domineering power in control of all activities to a more collaborative, supportive leader. In general, students change from generally passive learners into highly engaged, active learners. The teachers have developed lesson and course plans that enable students to come to grips with reading, studying, and writing at the same time. Such an approach has replaced lectures that were mostly monologues and pseudo class discussions that were mostly dialogues between the teacher and a few of the brightest and more interested students. The unmistakable central theme that emerges from the articles in this book is that learning will flourish best when students are active learners who take responsibility for discovering things for themselves. One of the most powerful methods of discovery is to permit students to inquire and write about the material they are learning.

We hope the points of view presented in this book will be useful to you whether you are an experienced teacher of writing-intensive courses or are contemplating teaching such courses for the first time. If you are a veteran, you may glean additional tactics and assignments to supplement your own approach. As an aid in locating writing assignments, we have made it easy to distinguish the assignments by bordering them with horizontal lines above and below and by putting them in a different typeface from the rest of the text. Our book primarily addresses those of you who have not yet taught a writing-intensive course. If you have not used writing extensively in the classroom, even thinking tentatively about implementing a writing-intensive course may be intimidating. It's a little like an English teacher being encouraged to teach algebra —with a bit of chemistry and physics learned from a crib sheet on the side—in an English course.

The ways in which writing is incorporated into the course will determine its usefulness and its success. You and your students will derive little benefit from merely adding writing assignments to the required work of a course. You must integrate the writing into the program curriculum and the course syllabus. Thus, if you are planning to teach writing-intensive courses for the first time, you should read the opening three chapters first, then read other chapters as you desire. But read the chapters in their entirety, because it is important to understand the rationale for a particular assignment and how that assignment relates to the objectives and other learning activities of the course.

But we encourage you to begin teaching writing-intensive courses. Fortunately, once having leaped into teaching a writing-intensive course, teachers find that even if they have been rather wobbly the first time through the course, they and their students survived the experience. More than that, they realize the benefits of writing assignments that increase the interaction among students and between students and themselves and that engage students more actively in the learning process. Most teachers become hooked.

Part One opens the book with three chapters written by members of the project staff that deal with the most basic principles underlying successful work in writing-intensive courses—the design of assignments, the evaluation and response to student writing, and the use of word processors. These chapters serve as an introduction to principles that will appear again and again in the other chapters.

The center of the book comprises several chapters that describe the great diversity of writing assignments that can be used in writing-intensive courses in a variety of areas. These chapters were written by teachers of vocational-technical courses who have used the assignments they describe in their own recent classes. The chapters in Part Two emphasize the relationship between Writing-as-Learning assignments and the World-of-Work assignments that prepare students to write the kinds of correspondence and reports they will write once they graduate and become professionals in their fields. Parts Three and Four, respectively, focus on writing-intensive courses that emphasize either Writing-as-Learning assignments or World-of-Work assignments. Part Five contains several chapters that describe additional writing assignments and course plans that can increase the variety and amount of writing that students do in writing-intensive courses. They address in particular the problem of how to work assignments into the general course plan. We provide an *editor's commentary* that follows each chapter on writing assignments. The purpose of this feature is to emphasize key points of each chapter as they relate to the main principles set forth in Part One and as they shed new light on the potential of writing across the curriculum for all vocational-technical courses.

Part Six presents two chapters that discuss implementing campus-wide programs in writing across the curriculum. The first deals with faculty development, the second with student development.

Though a number of the chapters have grown out of courses in very specific fields—office management, nursing, automotive mechanics, laser technology—you should be able to gather hints about effective classroom practice from the experience of these teachers, no matter what your field is. The project has made every effort, however, to cover in a general way the major divisions of vocational-technical education, so that at least one of our chapters should touch on issues that are central to the work of your specific area.

The West Texas Writing Project in Writing across the Curriculum was stimulating, instructive, and rated highly successful by it participants. I believe that I speak for all the participants when I say that we hope this book will find a place on the shelves of teachers regardless of their field. We believe that the experiences of the participants, as reported in this book, will provide suggestions and useful insights for teachers who teach writing-intensive courses in vocational and technical programs.

Part One

General Concerns

Chapter 1

Making Writing Work for You in The Interactive Classroom

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At the risk of scaring off teachers interested in writing across the curriculum, but with the hope of capturing the attention of those truly interested in good teaching and innovation to improve teaching, we suggest that making courses writing intensive means more than adding an essay on the final exam or even requiring a few hundred words of written assignments. Such steps are perhaps good as an interim measure, but they do not ultimately fulfill the promise implied in the phrase "writing *intensive.*" Even long assignments such as traditional term papers do not necessarily fill the bill. Simply adding on writing assignments to a course that is already ambitious in its objectives and assignments probably means teaching the same course in the same way but with extra work for you and students. We can promise something better.

Informal writing as an habitual activity in class becomes a primary means of learning. And writing assignments based on actual world-of-work documents help students develop a professional identity in the fields they are training for. These two goals are the primary justification for writing-intensive courses; they also establish a basis for creating writing assignments.

A writing-intensive course can trigger real reform of traditional academic teaching methods. Instead of the traditional classroom with a teacher lecturing to passive students (who will forget most of what they have heard a few months after the course ends), a writing intensive course engages students in the course material by asking them to write about it. They may, for example, spend five minutes at the beginning of the class hour summarizing a key concept from the assigned reading, without pressure of writing "correctly" or for a grade. The students' writing, and the sharing of it, encourages class discussion and interaction both with the teacher and with their classmates. Classes are likely to become workshops, at least for part of the hour, and to focus on problem solving rather than on accumulation of information. Assignments that parallel world of work writing tasks, such as short instructions for performing a procedure, help students identify themselves as responsible working people. These writing assignments encourage students to feel as though they belong to their vocational communities and are prepared to assume their roles in them. The positive attitudes that result from both types of assignments create a good classroom atmosphere and motivate more learning.

Many teachers in our project who have experimented with using writing assignments in just one course have seen an improvement in learning and an increase in enthusiasm from students. They have expanded their use of writing-intensive techniques to other courses. By contrast, teachers who add only a few additional assignments in writing or who make long assignments but provide little or no guidance or class time for writing see meager results and usually drop the assignments after a semester or two.

We recommend that, to start, you try the methods described in this chapter for one course only. If you're new to teaching, what do you have to lose? And if you're experienced, we suspect you're on the lookout for new techniques; otherwise you'd not be reading this book. Compare your students' attitudes toward learning and the actual information they grasp as compared to students in your other courses.

In this chapter, we begin by answering questions that often arise in writing-across-the-curriculum seminars. Then we define the way a writing- intensive course may work and how it may reform the entire learning environment of your courses. We also say why the instructional models we recommend may be better than traditional models of academic instruction in helping you to accomplish your specific objectives in vocational-technical courses. Finally, we give an overview of the kinds of assignments that our project has encouraged and that have proved useful to teachers as they develop specific plans for their own courses.

Questions

In the seminars we have given, we have met a few questions again and again about the nature of the writing intensive classroom. These questions may also arise in your mind as you think about using writing in your classes.

How will writing improve learning?

The act of writing reinforces what the students read and hear. Thus students have to learn the content of the course better if they have to write about it than if they can be passive readers and listeners. Preparing graphics can work in the same way that writing prose does. That is, students learn by drawing as well as by writing, and the drawing and writing can reinforce each other.

Furthermore, the type of class that results from students writing and sharing is an *interactive* class. Research in learning theory has clearly shown that the learning process is enhanced in interactive settings. Interactive models replace the passive student with an active student who forms learning links with the teacher and with the other students. Writing and talking are the best means of developing such connections and of *socializing learning*.

Many people working in the field of writing across the curriculum have tried to design empirical studies that measure the increase in learning resulting from the kinds of methods we offer. These efforts, though admirable, are ultimately doomed because of the profound difficulties of establishing controls in such research. Is it the teacher or the methods or the time of day or the mix of the students or the classroom setting or the slant of the sunlight in the window that makes one class perform better than another?

In favor of our argument for writing-intensive methodology, we offer this only: hundreds of teachers connected with our project and with similar ones across the country have reported excellent results in learning from writing-intensive courses. And this: students, after initial shock, seem happier in writing-intensive courses—to the continuous surprise of teachers who assume students to be inherently lazy and who expect serious resistance to the concept.

How can you cover all the information in the course if you spend time doing these writing assignments?

The best way to answer this question is to ask one in return: If you lecture on all the information the students could possibly ever use but they absorb as little as 20 percent of what you say, or if you test them on the information given in the class but they retain that material for as little as six months—then what good has it been to *cover* all the information? Wouldn't it be better to make the students independent learners by helping them to form links with information sources other than you the teacher? Wouldn't it be better to help them learn the forms and conventions of writing that they will use on the job rather than just academic forms? Writing assignments are one way to accomplish these goals, as the teachers in our project have learned and as many of them show in the other chapters of this guide. Writing assignments also place more of the burden for "covering" the material on the students rather than on the teacher. The students have to master the material to write about it, so they will read, listen, and observe more closely.

Why not traditional assignments like essay exams and term papers?

Certainly such assignments increase the amount of writing done in class and thus contribute to general literacy. But they do little to increase interactive learning or to help situate the students in their prospective discourse community—whose boss ever asked for a term paper or an essay? Term papers and essays tend to be reports of other researchers' learning rather than engaging students in their own discoveries. Furthermore, teachers tend to read just the final version, the "product," rather than working with students through the process of writing. Thus, they are evaluators—grade-givers—rather than teachers who will help the students master the process of research and writing by working with them through the stages of defining a topic, gathering information, and presenting it according to the conventions. The models offered in the next section of this chapter show how to enhance literacy *and* create an interactive learning environment.

I'm unsure of my own writing, particularly my grammar. How can I evaluate the writing of students?

Moving away from traditional ideas of writing assignments also moves us away from the idea that "good" writing is defined by its grammatical correctness. Some of the writing you will not even evaluate. When you do evaluate writing, you will look primarily for mastery of content or understanding of forms of writing used on the job. Chapter 2 will give you more ideas about evaluating writing.

One Word of Caution

You may find it difficult to reconvert your classroom to a traditional lecture format after you experiment with the workshop style we recommend. Students get used to the idea of interactive learning—the time passes so much faster!—and they consequently build resistance to 50-minute lectures. Teachers who strive for interaction learn to limit one-way exchanges of information. They rarely lecture for more than thirty minutes at a time, but rather intersperse mini-lectures among the various activities of the workshop. Once you become skilled at manipulating the activities of the workshop, you will find yourself offering such lectures on demand, as the need arises from the students themselves. And, when the students feel a real need for such information, they will certainly be more responsive to it.

Writing as Learning (WaL) and World-of-Work Writing (WoW)

The two models we have used for developing writing-intensive courses are both designed on the notion that writing is a process of social action. They are summarized in the following table:

Model	Purpose	Classroom Reform	Kinds of Assignments
Writing-as-Learning (WaL)	To use writing to demonstrate and enhance thinking processes and learning.	Process-oriented writing exercises and collaborative learning replace teacher's lectures and product-oriented writing assignments.	"Writer-based prose": journals, directed notes, in-class response papers ("free-writes"), lab or workshop logs.
World-of-Work Writing (WoW)	To use writing to develop professional awareness and identity.	Students learn to write for audiences of peers and professionals, not just for teachers.	"Reader-based prose": letters, memos, informal reports, oral reports, technical reports, proposals, manuals and instructions.

By the title *Writing-as-Learning* we don't mean to imply that the students don't learn anything when they do "World-of-Work" writing. It's just that WaL assignments help the student to focus almost entirely upon the content or information rather than upon conventions of writing, spelling, grammar, and format. It takes such limits off of the students—at least for the moment—and keeps attention on the material you want them to learn in any given lesson. It frees them to get things on paper which, depending on your objectives for the assignment, they can later revise and refine or which they can discard (they have not invested too much time and effort in it) as they move on to another assignment. Many teachers new to writing-intensive course design use only WaL assignments—and with good results.

In advocating this kind of assignment, we have often been accused of lowering standards of grading. Well, so be it. These should be *non-graded assignments* that are used only to prepare students for graded work. If you're worried about motivating them to do work for which they "don't get credit," then either give them some kind of "class participation" grade for this kind of work or, better yet, show them the advantages of doing the work. The experience of the teachers in our project shows that students respond well to non-graded assignments when the teacher can demonstrate to them that their performance on graded work will be improved by their participation in WaL sessions. Remember also that WaL can be simply an early stage of more formal writing that will eventually receive a grade. (See Chapter 2 on evaluating and responding to student writing.)

The prototype of all WaL assignments is the *journal* or notebook. Most of your students will have encountered such assignments in English classes, for journals are very popular in the teaching of writing these days. Most of their experience will be in writing personal journals whose goal is to get them to keep a log of experiences on any topic so long as they write and write some more. Bulk is important in this approach, and the self is a convenient topic with which the students are usually familiar. The main idea is to get them to write as much as they can and thereby to get used to putting words on the page.

In vocational-technical courses, you should retain something of this personal approach. Give your students time occasionally to respond personally to something they have read in their textbooks or done in the lab because this will help them to retain the experience and learn from it. *But keep most of the journal a public document focused on the content of the course,* a set of writings that can be used for class discussion and peer group work.

Have the students take 10 minutes at the beginning of class to write about the day's readings or the previous day's workshop. This type of assignment may be called a "directed note," brief writing with a topic and purpose that you direct. For example, ask them to describe a procedure or to compare it to one previously studied. Ask one or two of the students to read what they have written, and then invite the other students to use their writings to fill in any gaps. All the while you may be writing the main points on the board. Writing, reading, and talking mingle to create the interactive learning environment. The students will generate the content of the discussion, prompted by their writing. They will converse with one another as well as with you.

Or give an overnight informal journal assignment—a rough description of a mechanism you are working on in the shop, for example—and have the students compare their work in groups at the start of the next day's class. Allow each group to prepare a more finished description (using drawings as well as writing) and turn it in to you. The next day put a copy of the best group's paper on the overhead projector and use it as the basis of your lecture. In writing about the mechanism the students will have to consider the relationship of its parts or reasons for particular design choices; writing will help them understand the mechanism in a way that merely using or observing it will not. It should force them to ask "why" and "so what."

Or, if students have been studying repair of a piece of equipment and troubleshooting procedures, give them the facts of a "case study" and ask them to diagnose the problem and identify a probable cause. Continue, perhaps, by asking them to identify ways to verify the diagnosis. By writing down their ideas, *all* students will have to think about the answer to your question. This contrasts with asking a question to the entire class and only *one* student responds. Maybe the other students are engaged in thinking, and maybe not. Furthermore, as you discuss the written responses, the variety of responses will encourage students to consider possibilities other than the one they wrote down. Their responses will also let you see where there are gaps in the thinking or missing information. The feedback on their knowledge and understanding lets you supply additional information at the moment of need. The writing, a "problem-solving" assignment, shapes the class discussion that follows as well as the interaction among students and with the teacher.

The only difference between the journal and most other WaL assignments is that the others are not kept together but are "throw-away work"—short writings usually done in class and used to reinforce or introduce the course content. However, they can be gathered in a journal or notebook so that you and the students can see the progress made in the course. Slightly more formal WaL assignments include lab notebooks, learning logs, and early drafts of formal papers. At this level of writing, WaL assignments shade over into *World-of-Work Writing.*

WoW writing mirrors the types of writing that the students may expect to do once employed. A notebook kept in the workshop of an electronics technician is a highly professional piece of work that can be the basis for patent claims. The notes a nurse keeps on a patient's chart may have profound effects in the treatment of the patient—or in court. An auto mechanic's brief descriptions on a work form may well determine a customer's satisfaction ("$300.00 to 'Fix the door'!")

These forms of everyday writing make very good assignments in vocational-technical courses and may be used with or substitute for journals and other kinds of "classroom writing." If you explain their importance to the professional life your students are training for, you will greatly increase their motivation.

You can use these writings along with WaL assignments as raw material for more formal papers. Such raw material has been called *writer-based* prose because writers use it for their own benefit to develop thoughts, to remember processes, to get a clearer conception of things. When students make the shift to *reader-based* prose, they are producing documents by which their readers will benefit. This is the realm of transactional writing which makes things happen in the working world. *WaL assignments increase the number of learning links within the classroom by opening the lines of communication between the student, the student's peers, and the teacher; WoW writing potentially forms links outside the classroom by encouraging the students to do the kind of writing actually done on the job and actually addressed to the kinds of people the student will be working for and working with.*

At the end of one of our seminars, a teacher said to me, "I came here expecting to hear how we should get our students to write essays and term papers. When I realized that writing across the curriculum meant more than English across the curriculum, when I saw that I could use real-world writing in my class, I felt liberated!" Every professional and vocational field has its own *community of discourse,* meaning its own ways of communicating and its own forms of writing. As a technical-vocational instructor, you are an expert in this kind of writing. You have filled out the work orders, written the technical reports, dictated or typed the memos or letters, developed the proposals. You know what kind of writing your students will do in their working lives, so you are in the best position to make writing assignments on this basis.

But suppose you do not know this, or you are not sure about how things have changed, or your job experience has been limited to one company and you're afraid you'll not give the students a broad enough education in the possibilities of communication. Well, you can turn this deficiency to your advantage. As a WaL assignment, or an assignment for a short informal oral report to be given to the class, have the students research the kinds of communication done in the real world by talking to people from several different companies or organizations. Then have them produce a WoW assignment that replicates the kinds of writing they have learned about.

WoW writings do not have to be long—many kinds of technical and business writing are very short (work orders, for example, or advertisements)—but you will want to enforce such standards of professional quality as you think are applicable to your profession. In general, the work should be neat, grammatical, and clear.

The best way to teach these standards is not to lecture the students about grammar or style but to have them turn in early drafts of the work and review it with you and with their peers to determine how to achieve high quality, professional work. This way, they learn interactively, which usually means they learn well.

The WaL and WoW models support and complement each other in the following ways:

- Both replace the "academic model," the information flow of the traditional classroom (teacher to student and back to teacher) with a plan that allows students to become more active learners.
- Both enhance motivation—the WaL model draws on internal, personal sources; the WoW model turns to external, professional sources.
- The WaL model produces written raw material that can be refined into the kinds of formal writing suggested by the WoW model: writer-based writing + reader-based writing = transactional writing.
- Both models allow teachers to focus on the *content* of written work.
- Both are well suited to the philosophy of vocational-technical education: the WaL is a "learn by doing" model that turns the traditional classroom into a workshop or laboratory; the WoW model is intended to prepare students for work in a vocational setting.
- Both encourage literacy and effective writing.

Working the Assignments into the Course's Structure

The classroom reforms suggested by the interactive, writing-intensive approach may be summarized in the following table:

Instead of . . .	**Why not?**
Lectures based on readings.	Discussions based on short papers that respond to readings or workshop activities.
Homework problems.	Journals, directed notes, problem-solving writing assignments.
Papers turned in only in final form to be graded (product-oriented assignments).	Incrementally written papers with several drafts examined, discussed, and revised in class (process-oriented assignments).
One long term paper.	Several shorter papers.

Instead of . . .	**Why not?**
Independent, "lonely" writing.	Team-editing, team-writing, collaborative learning.
Academic writing (research papers, essay questions)	"World of Work" writing (memos, letters, reports, proposals, manuals).
Papers directed to the teacher or to a "general audience."	Papers addressed to peers or to a specific professional readership.
Papers written for the sole purpose of satisfying course requirements.	Purposeful, transactional papers that help others to act or that fulfill a definite, "real-world" need.

Using Writing Assignments to Accomplish Your Course Objectives

In a very helpful book, *Teaching Writing in the Content Areas: College Level* (National Education Association, 1986), Stephen N. Tchudi recommends that teachers develop writing assignments based on their stated course objectives. This approach dispels much of the mystery and confusion about what makes a good assignment. Just be clear about your objectives, and make them clear to your students.

Combine your objectives with a form of writing to create the assignment. The form may be developed from either the WaL model or the WoW model. Objectives that contain such words as know, recognize, and develop lend themselves to WaL assignments. Objectives with words like describe, present, communicate, and demonstrate are best realized in WoW writing. Both kinds of assignments, however, help the students to learn and to grow professionally.

If your assignments are based on clear objectives, *evaluation of the writing* is greatly simplified. The student's grade becomes a reflection of how well he or she was able to accomplish the learning goal made explicit in the stated objective.

Examples: A Course in Acoustics

On a syllabus for a course in Acoustics (Sound Technology) at South Plains College, we found the following objective:

> *Understand basic principles like energy, vibration, waves, and electrical production of sound.*

The key word is the verb "understand"; this hints at an assignment based on the WaL model, which stresses cognitive processes such as understanding and assimilation of new information. Again, *you don't want to try to accomplish too many objectives in one assignment,* so take the limits implied in professional standards of spelling and grammar off the students until they master the material they are working with. You might ask students to:

- Copy the definition of the given concept from their books; then have them state the concept in their own words with an example of why the concept is important in acoustics.
- Have them point out the difference between terms that are superficially similar or easily confused, like waves and vibrations.
- Copy the steps in the process of the electrical reproduction of sound from the book, then convert the process into a flow chart or simple diagram.
- List and describe the functions of the various parts of machines or instruments that the sound technologist uses, or draw or label a diagram of the object. Graphic display reinforces learning by writing, and vice-versa.

Another objective in the course on Acoustics was:

> *Apply principles of room acoustics to specific situations involving responses of the environment and reinforcement of sound control factors.*

Again the verb is the key word—"apply"—and this time it suggests that a WoW assignment would be appropriate. Depending on the kind of lab facilities or working context of the course, one of the three following assignments might be used:

- Analytical Report: Analyze the acoustic problems in X facility.
- Proposal: Analyze the acoustics in X facility and write a proposal for improving the acoustics. Be sure to give complete information about materials and costs.
- Catalog: Prepare a catalog of materials and their acoustic properties for use in describing options to clients.

Examples: Courses in Dental Hygiene

These sample assignments were developed by working from stated objectives on course outlines used at Howard College. We used them in a seminar on writing-intensive courses in dental hygiene.

Course: Principles of Nutrition

Objective: The student will be able to identify the role and function of major nutrients in body functioning, especially related nutrient needs to the oral cavity.

Assignment: Based on class discussions and your readings, keep a notebook that lists each of the major nutrients involved in the health of the oral cavity. Devote a separate page to each nutrient, and develop on that page as much information as you can about the nutrient. When the notebook is complete, use it to make a table that identifies and classifies, in the form of a comparative list, all the nutrients and their important properties. The notebooks will be checked periodically, and the table will be turned in for a grade.

Course: Dental Hygiene Seminar

Objective: The student should be able to develop a personal philosophy regarding his/her role in the prevention of oral disease.

Assignment: Keep a journal in which you apply what you learn about the theory and practice of dental hygiene to your own habits of hygiene and those of people you know. Discuss how bad habits lead to disease and how, once you are a practicing hygienist, you will help people to alter bad habits and care for those who cannot or will not change. Write at least two full pages a week. The journals will be checked periodically and will be given a grade at the end of the course.

Course: Dental Materials

Objective: The student will be able to demonstrate knowledge of materials commonly used in the practice of dentistry.

Assignment: [To be given as a "pop quiz" at the beginning of a class session] In your readings due for today, you learned about gypsum products. List as completely as you can the uses, chemical properties, and physical properties of these products. [The lists generated by the students will be used as the basis for a class discussion. Three students will volunteer to read their lists on uses, physical properties, and chemical properties. The other students will be invited to suggest what the volunteers have omitted. The lists may be collected for a quiz grade, or the students may keep them for a study guide.]

Course: Dental Radiography

Objective: The student should be able to recognize the important names, dates, and facts relating to the history of x-rays in dentistry.

Assignment: [To be done in groups of four or five during a class session] Prepare a time line of the important dates, events, and names relating to the history of x-rays in dentistry. Outside of class, prepare a neat copy of the time line, and turn it in during the next class meeting. You are welcome to use color coding and illustrations of your choice.

Course: Dental Radiography

Objective: The student should know the potential hazards of radiation and methods of minimizing these hazards.

Assignment: Find several case studies that demonstrate each of the major hazards of radiation. In your journals, tell about each case and discuss how the damage done could have been avoided.

Course: Dental Hygiene Clinical Practice

Objective: The student should be able to present a plan to each individual patient in accordance with his oral health needs and psychological needs.

Assignment: After studying the needs of your assigned patient and developing a notebook on his or her physical and psychological needs, write a dental health care plan to be approved by a supervisor and then delivered to the patient. [In class, have the students evaluate early drafts of each other's paper with the reviewing student in the role of supervisor.]

Course: Fundamentals of Clinical Dental Hygiene

Objective: The student should be able to describe the use and action of representative examples of sterilization, disinfection, and sanitation.

Assignment [for a class or group project]: Study the procedures of sterilization, disinfection, and sanitation in a given office setting, and develop careful notes on each practice. Then write a procedures manual that can be used by new employees to learn the preferred methods of the office and by old employees to efresh their memories about the procedures.

Examples: Courses in Robotics

Following are a few more sample assignments, which we developed by reading descriptions of courses in the catalog of the Texas State Technical Institute—Sweetwater.

Course: Rotating Devices

Objective: The student will develop a troubleshooting procedure for various rotating devices.

Assignment: For each rotating device discussed in the class, develop a flow chart or decision chart for troubleshooting. [Have students who have worked on one device exchange charts with those who have worked on another device who will then try to follow the procedures as outlined by the experienced students. Have them submit a critique or a revision of the flow charts they used.]

Course: Programmable Controllers

Objective: The student will develop ladder logic, sequencers, and drum controller programs and use them to control a variety of actuators.

Assignment: [To be given each day, unannounced, after the completion of a programming task] Write a brief description of the major problems you encountered in developing your program. State how you will avoid such problems in the future. [Have some of the students read their papers, and use these as points of discussion.]

Course: Robotic Safety

Objective: The student will demonstrate knowledge of maintenance safety, federal regulations, and robot system safety involving personnel and equipment.

Assignment: Visit a facility that makes heavy use of robotics, and, after developing a list of possible safety hazards in your notebook (to be approved by the instructor), write a recommendation report addressed to the manager of the facility, informing him or her on matters of compliance with regard to safety regulations.

Course: End Effectors

Objective: The student will be able to define the appropriate type of gripper, gripper drive system, and gripper sensor for a specific application.

Assignment: Write a short proposal (with illustrations) that recommends the appropriate gripper system for the application to which you have been assigned. Include the following sections: 1. Description of the mechanism, 2. Consideration of possible gripper types, 3. recommendation and description of appropriate system, 4. rationale for your recommendation, and 5. discussion of potential problems.

Course: Rotating Devices

Objective: The student will be able to install various rotating devices (motors, tachometers, resolvers, synchros, and encoders).

Assignment: Write an installation manual for one of the rotating devices examined in class. [To be given to pairs of students. Each pair will exchange and user-test their manual with another pair before turning in the work to the teacher.]

Further Examples

Following are more examples of writing assignments used in writing-intensive courses proposed for the West Texas Project in Writing across the Curriculum. We think that the statements of the assignments are such that the students could readily see the objective the teacher wanted to accomplish. Do you agree?

◊ For a course in ***Job-Seeking Skills*** (Teacher: Betty Jo Yeoman, Texas State Technical Institute—Amarillo): Journal-Writing Assignment #1:

1. What courses have you enjoyed most at TSTI-Amarillo? Why did you enjoy them? (5 pts.)

2. Describe the perfect job setting for you—what area of the country? city or small town? large or small company? (10 pts.)

3. Do you enjoy working by yourself or in a group? Why? (5 pts.)

4. Describe the qualities you would like in an employer. Why? (5 pts.)

5. What are the goals you hope to reach in the next five years? in the next ten years? (5 pts.)

◊ For a course in ***Advertising Art*** (Teacher: Marsha Twomey, San Antonio College):

> On the back of each of the four examples of advertising you have selected, answer the following questions in two or three sentences:
>
> 1. What is the purpose or objective of the ad you selected?
>
> 2. Why is the ad you selected more interesting, more eye-catching, more persuasive and /or potentially effective than other ads which have the same purpose?
>
> 3. Who would find this ad objectionable? Why? Who would find this ad misleading or untruthful? Why?

◊ For a course in ***Pediatric Nursing*** (Teacher: Michaelina Grundy, Vernon Regional Junior College):

> Read a total of five magazine articles on a pediatric illness or a pediatric health problem. Fill out one 3 X 5 note card for each article (total of 5 cards for the semester). Write the following information on each card:
>
> 1. Your name
>
> 2. Name, month, and year of magazine
>
> 3. Name of article and author
>
> 4. Brief summary of main topics covered in the content
>
> 5. Significance of this information in defining the nurse's role in the care and health promotion of children and young adults.

◊ An in-class assignment for a course in ***Auto Diesel Physics*** (Teacher: Neil Barnes, South Plains College—Lubbock):

> Tell me, in your own words, the difference between the mass of an object and the weight of an object. When is this distinction most important, and is this distinction important in your activities in the shop? Do not give me formulas, and do not talk about scales and balances. Be prepared to discuss your paper in class.

◊ For a course in ***Fashion Advertising and Sales Promotion*** (Teacher: Tori Nayfa, Texas State Technical Institute—Sweetwater):

Select a major advertiser (primary producer, apparel manager, or a fashion retailer), and collect 6-10 ads run by that company. Prepare a report covering the following:

- The company's merchandising policy—the merchandise acceptance curve for its current merchandising assortments.
- The company "image"—Do the ads match this?
- Does the copy go with the art? Analyze the visuals, is there a well defined format? Is the use of art-work, typography, layout, and decorative elements consistent?
- Are the ads easy to read? Are they simple? Is the language appropriate to the image, the merchandiser, the audience, and the medium?
- Do the ads motivate to action?

◊ For the same course:

Develop a simple promotional campaign using

1) a pull method of marketing

2) a push method of marketing

3) a push-pull method of marketing.

◊ For the same course:

Given a set of facts, write a press release in the proper format (inverted pyramid).

◊ For a course in ***Interior Design Technology*** (Teacher: Barbara Farnan, Texas State Technical Institute—Amarillo):

Write a design concept statement for a building. [Sample concept statements are discussed, and other students review the written statements, using a page of guidelines developed and distributed by the instructor.]

◊ A series of assignments for a course in ***Human Services*** (Teacher: Iona Heartsill, South Plains College—Lubbock): After two weeks to familiarize themselves with a human services facility and to meet a client/patient with whom they will be working in that facility, the students will write a standard social history based on their interview with the client. Any information not obtainable from the client must be researched in client files. As soon as the social history is completed, students will write a plan of services based on the needs of the client identified in the interview and research in the files. This student plan should complement the facility's service plan. Next the student should begin work with the client. This work is recorded weekly in the form of progress notes to be turned in every two weeks. At the end of the planned services (end of semester), each student will write a summary of services and progress based on the client's records and the student's experience with the client.

Summary

In a writing intensive course, helping the students to become better writers is just one of the goals. Through writing, students should increase their ability to express themselves and to converse, both orally and in writing, with others. Two other goals serve the aims of the vocational-technical course directly: 1) better learning—writing increases the students' engagement with the subject matter and therefore greater mastery; it also increases their enthusiasm for the class; 2) students' identification of themselves as professionals, able to use the forms and conventions of writing in their own vocations and to make them work for their transactional purposes. Thus, a writing intensive course improves the quality of the course and prepares students for writing at work.

The writing intensive course is likely to move the classroom away from a traditional lecture format into a workshop and from emphasis on accumulating information to the process of knowing and problem solving. It encourages interaction among the students and with the teacher and an active role in learning for the students.

Chapter 2

Evaluating and Responding to Student Writing

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Many vocational-technical teachers are initially reluctant to accept the idea of writing-intensive courses because they fear they will be overwhelmed by the task of evaluating writing assignments. As one participant of our writing-across-the-curriculum workshop commented, "I . . . dreaded the additional burden of having to read and assess written assignments. Much of the fear or anxiety came from not having a plan . . . and no previous bank of experience to draw from." However, nearly a year later when I interviewed eight experienced teachers of writing-intensive vocational courses, not one of them complained about having to evaluate their students' writing assignments.[*] In fact, even when I asked them specifically what they liked least about evaluating student papers, they had few negative comments. All of them insisted that the rewards of having their students write far outweighed the disadvantage of having to respond to the papers.

The Problem of Grades

The only complaint that the teachers voiced was the problem of assigning grades. They found it difficult to determine grades yet felt guilty if they did not give the students grades. One instructor, a business teacher, compared grading student writing with being a Little League umpire. In both instances, he pointed out, you are forced to be "judgmental" and "have to make unpopular decisions." He concluded, "There are times when I have to respond negatively to a student even though I may know that the student really gave it a decent try, but the results just aren't acceptable." Another instructor, a typing teacher, pointed out that she felt guilty about not grading her students early drafts because, as she explained, she just didn't feel as if they "should be graded at this point." We are so conditioned to put a grade on everything that our students submit to us that we believe we are not "doing our jobs" if we don't.

Although, traditionally, teachers have evaluated students' writing assignments by assigning grades to them, most teachers do not really believe that the letter or number they place on a writing assignment reflects accurately the value of that assignment. As one automotive instructor observed, "Sometimes you can tell that a person has put a lot of time and effort into something, and yet they didn't come across quite like you would like for them to. And other times, maybe a different individual may not have put much effort into it, and, although it looks good on the surface, you know that it's not very deep, you know that they didn't spend much time on it. So . . . I think that when you assess it as A, B, C, or whatever, . . . it's difficult to say, 'Well, this person didn't accomplish this'."

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[*] I would like to thank the following teachers who shared their experiences in evaluating student writing with me: Marilee Aldana, Neal Barnes, Elia Chacon, Davie Johnson, Lee Moore, Sandy Peck, Agnes Robinson, and Tana Whiteman.

In spite of our distrust of grades, our realization that they do not always reflect accurately or fully the value of an assignment, they are a necessary evil. We put grades on papers because we must, because our students and administrators expect us to and because that is how we were evaluated by our teachers. Grades are simply part of the system to which we belong. We must assign grades to our students at the end of a semester, and we must have something on which to base those grades.

However, the responsibility to grade our students at the end of the semester should not force us to respond to every written assignment with a grade. Many writing assignments—especially writing-as-learning assignments, which are designed primarily to encourage learning or exploration—should be responded to in some other way. And even world-of-work assignments, those that are intended to teach students how to communicate effectively and appropriately with a professional audience, can be responded to in various ways before they are assigned a grade. In fact, grading a paper in the traditional sense—that is, putting a numerical or letter grade at the top or bottom of the assignment—is perhaps the least effective method of evaluating student writing.

In this chapter, I would like to suggest some additional ways that you can evaluate and respond to your students' writing. Each written assignment, depending on its purpose and the audience for whom it is intended, requires a different method of evaluation. You cannot evaluate a learning log or a journal, which is primarily intended for the student's own use, in the same way that you evaluate a formal report or a memo that is intended for a reader other than the student. Therefore, I cannot outline a simple procedure of evaluation that will serve for every assignment. But I can provide you with general guidelines.

Distinguish Between Evaluation and Response

This rule is basic. If you don't distinguish between evaluating and responding to student writing, you may easily be overwhelmed by your students' written assignments or, equally undesirable, you may find yourself limiting the amount of writing you require. Responding to student writing means reacting to *what* the student has written—the ideas, emotions, information, and attitudes reflected in the writing. Your responses may be informal and brief, but try to respond to what your students have written as often as possible. Students will not take writing seriously if they feel that they are writing in a vacuum. They need to sense that they are involved in a real act of communication—that someone is reading what they have written and reacting to it.

A reading instructor discovered how important her comments were to her students when she failed to include them on one assignment:

> *The students are very accustomed to seeing comments from me, and one day, for some reason, I just went through some papers, and I didn't write much. I gave a check or I said "good" or something like that. And you should have seen those students. I passed papers back, and I didn't realize the value of my comments until I looked at their faces . . . One asked "Why didn't you write more on our papers?" And then I realized how much that meant to those students.*

Fortunately, responding to student writing is not difficult. It requires no special expertise and very little time. Brief notes or comments indicating that you have read what the student has written are sufficient. For example, you might comment on the student's insight into the subject, accuracy in reporting information, effective tone, clarity of expression, originality, or comprehensiveness. Better yet, you can respond to the student's ideas by indicating that you agree or disagree with a certain idea or by relating a similar experience or reaction that you have had. For example, in a journal a nursing student may express dismay at the conditions of a nursing home to which he or she is assigned, and you might want to share with that student how you felt when you first encountered a similar situation. The comments do not need to be long or complex but should address the content of the writing so that the student feels that the response is to what he or she has said.

Evaluating student writing is slightly more difficult than responding to writing since it involves a consideration of form as well as matter—how the paper is written as well as what is written. Evaluation may or may not involve a grade, but it always involves assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the students' writing. Although teachers who do not have formal training in the teaching of writing often feel insecure about evaluating students' papers, they nearly always have the expertise needed to identify what is good and what is less good about the student's writing.

Assessing weaknesses does not mean identifying every grammatical error or knowing the exact terminology to use in describing what students have done well and what they have done less well. As an expert in the subject that you teach, you know better than any writing expert whether your students have expressed themselves effectively and appropriately. Your evaluation should consist primarily of indicating to your students how you, as an expert reader, reacted to their writing. Was it clear? Could you understand what they meant? Was it adequately developed, well organized, accurate, readable? Could they improve on the form they have used? And, finally, were there distracting errors? Indicating to your students how well their writing communicates to a reader is what evaluation is all about.

Respond to Writing-as-Learning Assignments and Evaluate World-or-Work Assignments

Like all guidelines, this one doesn't work all of the time. However, it applies more often than not. The purpose of writing-as-learning assignments is to encourage students to learn—to explore new material, to relate new information to prior knowledge and experiences, and to make new connections. When students write to learn, you want to emphasize the process rather than the product. The point is not that the students produce an acceptably written document but that they learn from the process of writing. Therefore, although you may want to give them credit for fulfilling the assignment, you do not want to *evaluate* what they have written by giving it a grade; but you may very well want to *respond* to what they have written. Your response may consist of just a few words or a lengthy note in which you take issue with something the student has said. For example, one dental hygienist gives her students problems such as "What would you do if you noticed that one of your fellow students was using unsterile instruments?" and asks them to react to the problem in their journals. When she reads their journals, she needs to respond to their content—to what they have written. She would not want to mark spelling errors and ignore the students' ideas and feelings. The important thing is that students know you are taking them and what they have to say seriously.

The purpose of world-of-work writing assignments, on the other hand, is to help students learn to communicate effectively and appropriately with an audience (ideally, the type of reader with whom they will be expected to communicate in their future professional lives). It is, therefore, usually necessary to evaluate the paper that they produce as a result of this type of assignment.

However, *this evaluation should be positive as well as negative*. Be sure to evaluate strengths as well as weaknesses. For example, if a student has written a good introduction but a weak conclusion, point out both. Knowing that the introduction is effective, the student may be able to rewrite the weak conclusion more effectively. Or if a student uses examples to develop one part of a paper but has other paragraphs that are underdeveloped, point out the effective examples so that he or she will know how to improve the weak paragraphs. Merely identifying the underdeveloped paragraphs without pointing out those that are well developed is giving the student only half of what is needed. It is important that students know what they do right as well as what they do wrong, for it is by building on their strengths that they improve. If they only know how they failed, they have no way of knowing how to succeed.

Evaluate Your Students' Writing at Different Stages

Any writing assignment worth evaluating is worth evaluating as it is being produced. Initially, you will want to evaluate a rough draft of the assignment to give your students direction in preparing the final draft. It may sound as if, by looking at both the rough draft and the finished paper, you are doubling the amount of work you will have to do. You will find, however, that very little extra time is required. When you examine the rough draft, you can focus on substantive matters such as content, organization, and development. Then, when you evaluate the final draft, you can concentrate on form. For example, if you are teaching nursing students how to enter information on a patient's chart, you might require several drafts before allowing the students to write on the chart. On the first draft, you would determine only if the information is complete and accurate. On the second draft, you would comment on how well the students express the information—is it clearly and appropriately written so that other professionals would understand it. Then on a third draft, you can focus on matters of form such as correctness of terminology and neatness. And, finally, the students could enter this revised and edited draft onto the patient's chart.

Both you and your students will be less frustrated by this system, you because you will not be marking errors in sentences that really need to be omitted or revised extensively, they because they will not be focusing on correctness and form before they have dealt successfully with content and organization. In time, they will become more skillful at attending to all of these concerns simultaneously. But, in the meantime, you will have the opportunity to give them suggestions about improving the assignment on which they are wording and, at the same time, teach them that writing is always a process even though, as we become more experienced writers, the process becomes less fragmented and more efficient.

Even more important are the messages that this method of evaluating papers sends to your students. First, it suggests to them that *writing is a process and they should not expect to produce a final draft without several rough drafts*. You may want to encourage them to produce more than a single rough draft, but I would insist on seeing at least one. I also like for students to submit their rough drafts with their final copies, not only to emphasize the importance of the rough draft but also to allow me to see the revisions they have made. Second, evaluating writing in stages suggests that content and organization are more important than spelling and punctuation. You certainly don't want to ignore conventions such as sentence structure, spelling, and punctuation (not to mention format) on the final draft of a world-of-work assignment, but neither do you want to imply that these conventions are the most important features of the paper. Most students are already convinced that teachers are only concerned with the errors they make, so you don't want to reinforce that impression. Third, evaluating a paper in stages suggests that you value your students and what they have to say enough to intervene in the process repeatedly. As a result, students perceive you as a coach, eager to help them improve their skills, rather than as an umpire, ready to call them "out."

Respond to Your Students' Writing Orally as Well as in Writing

Although teachers of writing-intensive courses should themselves be perceived as writers and should interact with their students in writing frequently, you do not need to limit yourself to writing. You can also evaluate and respond to your students orally. For example, you can schedule individual conferences, hold "mini-conferences" in class, or ask students to read aloud in class so that you and the other students can respond to what they have written.

All of these methods are fairly time consuming, but they are also rewarding. Students usually react very positively to this type of individual attention. Weak, inexperienced writers, especially, benefit from talking about their writing because they can explain to you "what they meant to say" or why they wrote something as they did. You, in return, gain insights into their writing and thinking processes as you talk with them. You will also be more likely to give them extensive comments when you are talking with them. When we respond in writing, we tend to be brief. In addition, written comments tend to emphasize the mechanics of writing and to focus on errors whereas oral comments tend to emphasize content, organization, and readability. It is, obviously, easier to mark a spelling error than to explain why something is not clear or why this point is underdeveloped and that one in the wrong place. I suspect teachers are also more inclined to make positive comments when facing a student than when writing on that same student's paper late at night after an exhausting day.

Some teachers use tape recorders to respond to their students' writing. This method is certainly an acceptable variation and may work quite well for you. The usual procedure is to ask each student to buy a tape at the beginning of the semester. Then you can record your comments on the tape as you read the student's paper. However, I believe that conferences and oral work in class offer advantages that the tape-recorder method lacks. Students benefit from the interaction that results from talking with them personally. In fact, adding conferencing, group work, and oral class activities to your courses can significantly improve students' learning. By requiring writing assignments and then responding to these assignments orally, you transform your students' writing into a real learning experience for your students.

Let Your Students Respond to and Evaluate One Another's Writing

It is tempting to assume that sole responsibility for responding to students' writing should be yours, and it is true that you must assume this responsibility most often. However, there is no reason why your students cannot occasionally evaluate one another's writing. Peer evaluations not only relieve you of some of the burden of responding to writing but also serve as learning experiences for the students.

Peer evaluations can take several different forms. For example, you can divide your students into groups of three to five students and ask them to read aloud their papers, responding to each paper as it is read, or you can divide students into pairs and let them read each other's papers, suggesting possible revisions. Another possibility is to let the students read their papers before the entire class. After a paper is read, the students can respond to it orally or in writing.

The type of class you are teaching, the size of the class, the amount of time you can devote to the peer evaluation, and the type of writing assignment you have given should all be taken into consideration when you design the evaluation activity. In general, ask students to read their papers aloud if you want a response and let them read one another's papers when you want an evaluation. For example, if you have asked them to write a set of instructions for a certain process as a writing-as-learning assignment, you might ask your students to divide into groups and read their instructions aloud so that the other students can respond by indicating whether they find the instructions clear. On the other hand, if the students are working on a world-of-work writing assignment, such as a case history, feasibility study, or report, they can evaluate one another's papers at different stages by offering suggestions for revisions and corrections.

If peer evaluation is to be effective, a valid learning experience rather than busy work or an opportunity to visit with classmates about the weather or the latest movie, then you must structure them carefully. Students need specific guidelines if they are to evaluate one anther's writing successfully. These guidelines can be brief and simple ("Identify the strongest and weakest feature of the paper that you read") or lengthy and complex (a step-by-step checklist that asks specific questions about every aspect of the paper), but they must be definite and should be primarily content-oriented. If you merely tell them to respond to what they read (or hear), their responses will be as vague and unproductive as your directions. Or, even less productive, they will try to find usage, punctuation, and spelling errors in the paper while totally ignoring its content. Although some general guidelines can serve for a number of different writing assignments, it is usually best to design a different evaluation form or set of instructions for each different writing assignment. At the end of this chapter, I include several possible peer evaluation forms and checklists, but you will want to use these only as general models to guide you in developing your own.

By evaluating and responding to one another's writing students not only learn content—information and concepts that they might not encounter or retain if they are working on their own—but also improve their writing skills. It is much easier to be objective about someone else's writing, so in serving as an audience for other students' writing, they acquire skills that they can later transfer to their own writing. In fact, students can learn as much from one another as they can from us if we allow them to interact and to share the information and ideas they have with one another. Since in the "real world," the one for which we are supposedly preparing them, people usually work in teams, we are also helping them acquire important collaborative skills when we allow them to evaluate and respond to one another's writing.

Encourage Your Students to Evaluate Their Own Writing

Ultimately, however, students must learn to take responsibility for their own writing, especially their world-of-work writing. As professionals, even if they are writing with a team, they are responsible for what they contribute. Therefore, as students they need to learn to evaluate their own writing—to serve as their own audience by reading their own writing critically. Self-evaluations are, however, challenging for both teacher and students. If you merely tell your students to assess what they have written, they will merely read their papers to themselves and come to the conclusion that it "sounds" fine to them. And it does sound fine to them because they know what they *meant* to say even if they did not communicate that meaning in the sentences they actually wrote. It also sounds fine to them because, like all readers, they read selectively, seeing only the words that are necessary to make meaning. And, since they have very recently written these words themselves, they don't have to look at very many of the words to remember the intended meaning.

There are several ways to help your students become more effective evaluators of their own writing. The most important of these is to help them realize that rewriting, like writing, is a process that consists of at least three separate stages:

1. Writers need to revise, to make substantive changes in the content, focus, organization,and development.
2. They need to edit what they have written—to make minor modifications in diction and sentence structure so that their writing communicates clearly and effectively.
3. They need to proofread their papers carefully to eliminate minor distracting errors.

Students who are inexperienced writers tend to collapse this entire process into a single step. Ask them to rewrite, or revise, their papers, and they will simply copy them over neatly, perhaps looking up a few words in the dictionary to check on their spelling. Until they have become experienced writers, able to attend to all three stages simultaneously and recursively, they should be encouraged to go through each stage consciously and deliberately—first revising to make major changes, then editing to make their writing more readable, and finally proofreading to make minor adjustments and corrections.

Another way you can help your students to evaluate their own writing more effectively is to give them specific strategies and directions for each stage of the rewriting process. For example, you can suggest that they read their papers aloud before revising because they can often recognize problems in clarity and organization if they hear themselves (or better yet someone else) read their paper aloud. Or you can tell them to read their papers backward, sentence by sentence individually rather than seeing it in a familiar context. Reading what they have written aloud also helps students to proofread more effectively because when they read aloud they are forced to attend more closely to what is actually on the page as opposed to what is in their minds. If students understand that "normal" reading involves seeing only as many words as is necessary to make sense of what is on the page, they may be able to modify their normal reading process when they proofread so that they look carefully at each word and mark of punctuation.

Self-evaluation, like peer evaluation, benefits from specific directions on the part of the instructor. If you tell your students to read their papers at different stages in the writing and rewriting process and give them specific instructions about what to evaluate, they will be more successful. If your instructions are vague and general, the students' efforts will be ineffectual. They need to know specifically what they are evaluating even if it is only the strongest and weakest features of the paper. Included at the end of this chapter are several self-evaluation forms that you can use as models. However, self-evaluations, like peer evaluations, need to be designed for specific assignments (or even specific students), so you will want to adapt these forms to your own purposes and to the needs of your students.

Conclusion

We sometimes forget that the purpose of evaluation is not simply to judge our students—to pronounce them as smart or dumb, good or bad. Although we are responsible for assigning final grades to our students and must evaluate them in order to make those decisions, evaluations serve other purposes as well. When we evaluate our students' writing, we are first of all determining what our students have learned and, more important, what they still need to learn. We are also teaching our students when we evaluate them or encouraged them to evaluate themselves or one another. In fact, any form of evaluation that does not diagnose or teach as well as assess should probably be discarded.

Ultimately, teachers must not only decide what their students should write but also how their writing can best be evaluated. When I asked an instructor of dental hygiene how she evaluated the writing assignments that she required of her students, she described it as "a sharing process." She explained that she used her students' written assignments to "learn who they are and what they will be as professionals" and to "keep tabs on whether or not they are comprehending what we are learning." Although this instructor was somewhat apologetic about not actually putting a grade on all of her students' written assignments, her method of evaluation was very appropriate for the types of assignments that she required.

Evaluating and responding to our students' writing may require our time and effort, but the rewards are substantial. Perhaps the greatest reward, or at least the one that is most immediately gratifying, is the reward of getting to know our students better. As a teacher of writing, I cannot imagine teaching a class in which I did not know my students "on paper." Reading what they have written, whether it is writing as learning or writing for the world of work, allows me to know them in a way that is simply not possible otherwise. As one teacher commented after reading her students' journals, "I thought that I knew them, but I didn't. Now I know them."

Peer-Evaluation Form

(Appropriate for rough draft of world-of-work writing assignment)

1. Comment briefly on each of the following:

- Paper's clarity (or readability)—

- Paper's organization—

- Paper's development—

2. Describe briefly the audience for whom this paper would be appropriate.

3. How could the writer address this audience more effectively?

4. What is the paper's greatest strength?

5. In what ways could the paper be improved? Be specific.

Peer-Evaluation Form

(Appropriate for final draft of world-of-work writing assignment)

1. List below any misspelled words that you find in this paper:

2. Write below any sentences in which you think punctuation errors exist:

3. Comment below on the paper's general appearance (format, neatness, etc.):

Peer-Evaluation Form

(Appropriate for writing-as-learning assignment)

1. Is the information in this paper accurate? List below any information that you think is inaccurate or misleading:

2. What is the best feature of this paper?

3. What is the weakest feature of this paper?

4. What did you learn from reading this paper?

Checklist for Peer- or Self-Evaluation

(Appropriate for world-of-work writing assignment)

1. Introduction

    _____ Includes appropriate background information

    _____ Clearly states purpose of paper

2. Content of paper

    _____ Adequately developed with appropriate information

    _____ Effectively organized

    _____ Clearly expressed

3. Conclusion

    _____ Reinforces purpose of paper

    _____ Provides appropriate sense of completion

4. Format

    _____ Appropriate for content and audience

    _____ Attractive in appearance

    _____ Clear to audience

5. Grammar and punctuation

    _____ Sentences are complete and correctly punctuated.

    _____ Verbs agree with subjects and pronouns with antecedents.

    _____ Words are spelled correctly.

6. General appearance

    _____ Neatly typed or handwritten according to directions

Self-Evaluation Form

(Appropriate for world-of-work writing assignment)

1. Who is my intended audience for this paper?

2. What is the purpose of this paper?

3. Have I accomplished this purpose?

4. What is the best feature of this paper?

5. How can I build on this good feature to improve my paper?

6. What is the weakest feature of this paper?

7. How can I eliminate or strengthen this feature?

8. What would I do differently if I could repeat this assignment?

Chapter 3

Reinforcing the Scheme of Things: Using Word Processors in Writing across the Curriculum

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In my technical writing classes I teach many of the standard report forms, including the letter of application and resume. I urge my students to include mention of the writing courses they have had to get them to emphasize their writing skill. Recently one of my students wrote this in her letter of application to NCR Corporation: "By May 1988, I will have taken six hours of technical writing, in addition to *other courses which require written communication.*" This was the first time I had ever heard a student acknowledge, much less brag on, writing in non-English courses. To me this acknowledgement was a sign that the student realized the importance of writing in all fields, be they academic or not. But in addition, these were encouraging words to teachers in non-English classes: writing-intensive activities make a real difference to students, in this case, they might have helped a student get a job.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine writing-intensive activities from the point of view of the word processor. My intention is to explore how word processing can be used in writing-intensive vocational and technical classes to reinforce for our students that the writing they do in these classes is, in fact, real writing, and is, therefore, valuable.

Word processing deserves attention for a number of reasons. First, it is the most important technology for writing to come along since the pen and pencil. Like these tools, it is valuable for recording words, but it does so in a different way. The word processor stores words digitally, instead of analogically (as in specks of ink or graphite.) This method of storing words allows computers to manipulate the words much more quickly than other methods could. To the writer this advantage means that files (documents) and sentences are overall more fluid, more changeable, more controllable. This fundamental advantage allows for a number of other benefits: writers write more using word processors, they tend to collaborate with others more easily using word processors, and they revise their documents more easily using word processors. However, a major reason for using word processing is that it reinforces a recursive model of writing over a linear model. That is, it reinforces a model of writing that is conducive to the kinds of writing done in writing-intensive classes. This idea is important enough to warrant exploration in some detail, because it touches on some key issues involved in understanding the benefits of word processors in writing to learn.

In this chapter we will look first at the models we use to describe our writing and see how the word processor reinforces the preferred recursive model. Having a clear idea of the writing process itself, we will then proceed to examine the two kinds of writing used in writing-intensive classes: writing-as-learning and world-of-work assignments. Building on these two preliminary sections, we will then review, in general, a variety of ways that word processing can support these two kinds of writing, ending with two detailed examples of word processing exercises for each kind.

Models of Writing

If we examine the things we do when we write we will discover, as many have done before, certain activities that characterize the process. Writers brainstorm, outline, think, draft, organize, revise, proofread, check spelling: all recognizable activities which we lump together under the name of writing. Some of us do more or less of one activity or another, but for the sake of a model we could probably derive a consensus of a group of activities most writers engage in.

It is useful to consider how this group of activities occurs in time. Some of the activities seem to fall naturally earlier in the process of writing, others fall naturally later in the process. Brainstorming and outlining, seem to come early; drafting falls somewhere in the middle; proofreading and checking spelling fall somewhere towards the end. While different people would align theses activities at different points in time, most would be able to achieve a general representation of the sequence. The result would be a linear model of the writing process, with events occurring one after another, leading from idea to finished product.

Most writers operate without ever articulating the model of their writing processes; others see it in this linear fashion. There is much to say in favor of seeing writing linearly: for one thing, it feels natural. For another thing, it mirrors the way we perform other developmental activities: products are developed according to a linear model, analyses of various kinds follow a linear model. However, for writing, the linear model has certain drawbacks. It is those drawbacks that challenge us to see writing according to a different model.

What are the drawbacks of the linear model of writing? The most apparent of them is that, in fact, many writers do not follow a strict order in writing. Some do their outlining very late in the process, some start writing very early. Some more compulsive writers proofread all the way along, rather than waiting until the end. Furthermore, experienced writers seem to have trained themselves to work on organization long after less experienced writers have "finished" organizing. The linear model of writing, in fact, only works as a convenient way to assemble certain writing events. What researchers have discovered is that writing follows what they call a "recursive" model: a model that mirrors the haphazard way people really approach writing.

In its simplest form, recursive writing allows for all the writing activities to occur simultaneously. The recursive model acknowledges the fact that writers read what they have written and use what they have read to write further. Writers "loop back" into their work. Similarly, they do not always add new material to the end of their compositions; they add new material where they feel it is needed, to flesh out some ideas or further develop others. More importantly, the recursive model mirrors, in some ways, the way our minds work in solving writing problems.

And as teachers who use writing, we can benefit by encouraging the recursive model with our students. but the question remains, how does word processing fit into the picture? And this question is only part of an even larger question: to what extent do the tools we use to write with reinforce either the linear or recursive model? When we speak of tools for writing, we are addressing the realm of writing technology. We need to realize that the pencil and pen are in fact a technology: one that has worked well for writers for centuries. The typewriter is similarly a technology. When we work with pen and paper we are constrained, to some extent, by the nature of the tool. For example, when a writer gets the first idea for a composition, that idea, in sentence or word form, tends to be written somewhere towards the top, left corner of the page. The next idea follows below the first, and so forth. But placing our ideas on the page as they occur to us may not be the best way to organize the finished composition. The mind skips around following a seemingly random order; finished compositions usually should not skip around in a random order. Readers like order. So to reorganize a penciled composition the entire composition needs to be re-copied: a tedious task.

Faced with the inherent linearity of their composition tools, writers have devised ways to get around the problem. One writer I know writes all her paragraphs on separate pages and then reassembles them as the overall shape of a document becomes clear to her. Others use a "cut and paste" strategy for reorganizing without retyping. Still others, overwhelmed by the tedium of transcribing their work, give up and submit work that they know could be better organized. These writers, often our students, compromise to meet deadlines. And in doing so, voluntarily "stop thinking" in order to get the job finished.

Using a word processor, however, the natural flow of ideas can be reorganized easily to reflect the order that would best communicate with our reader. Organization is less of an immediate problem while composing, because there is no need for retyping. And with the flexibility of moving the cursor, new material may be added at various points within an on-going composition project. In other words, word processors reinforce the recursive model to the extent that they are an adaptive technology. Word processors help writers not in a simple way by making revision easier. But they help in a complex way by allowing text production to reflect the way we think. For the purposes of this article, we should note that, for teachers in all areas, the reinforcement of thinking is a major goal. And that word processors directly affect this key idea argues for our continued exploration of the medium in our classes.

In the preceding discussion we have seen how consideration of writing technology should start with examination of the writing process itself: the models we use to represent the kinds of activities we use when writing. Further exploration of writing in the vocational-technical classes needs to follow the same procedure: what kinds of writing are we doing and how can word processors enhance that writing. There are, in fact, two kinds of writing commonly used in writing-intensive classes in vocational-technical subjects: Writing-as-Learning and World-of-Work.

Word Processing Support for Writing-as-Learning

The primary use for word processors in supporting writing-as-learning activities is in encouraging free-form composition that facilitates exploratory thinking. In addition to encouraging more writing, word processors are good for recording brainstorming sessions and group composing. By basing exercises on the types of writing-as-learning tasks described below, teachers can help students overcome writer's block and generate potential material for assignments in transactional writing.

Journals

Word processors are particularly useful for keeping journals. As students ease with the keyboard progresses they seem to find it more profitable and less of a chore to fill up screens rather than write on paper. And studies have shown consistently that when they write with a word processor students tend to write more.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a useful exercise that does not require the writing of sentences: just lists and ideas. Brainstorms on a word processor screen allow for group work easily, and they allow for categorizing and classifying of ideas.

Heuristics

Heuristics are patterned questions designed to evoke thought from writers about topics. A common heuristic is the journalist's 5 w's (who, what, where, when, and why). Traditionally these questions were filled out on a sheet of paper, but with a word processor the questions can be typed onto a diskette. Students answering the questions are not limited by the physical space between the questions on the page, and can skip around in the questions, following their inspiration.

On-Screen Outlining

On-screen outlining is a way to develop brainstormed ideas right on the screen, bypassing the usual pencil and paper technique. Outlines on the screen are easily revised and need not have the usual roman numbers and letters. An on-screen outline can precede the actual drafting of a text or be created on the spot wherever a writer wants to add new material. But the main advantage of an on-screen outline is that writers can begin developing sentences and paragraphs right in the outline, so that the outline and the finished document are the same file. As indicated below, on-screen outlining provides an important tool for reinforcing thought and writing.

Sample Exercise for Writing-as-Learning: On-Screen Outlining

In order to see how the word processor can be a useful tool for writing-as-learning, I suggest the following simple exercise. The exercise works well with students and with teachers as a way of encouraging on-screen writing. This activity does not require any knowledge of computer use. It uses the concepts of brainstorming and using code words, and is especially useful if you pair writers up at the keyboard, because they can help each other if they get stuck.

The exercise consists of two parts: 1) brainstorming on the computer screen, and 2) turning the brainstormed list into text. To begin with, you need to have the computers up and running, with an empty file for students to work in. I prepare for the exercise by asking the students to tell me some of the things they do when writing. Then, with their help, I show them how these activities could fit onto a time continuum: roughly, from prewriting to final draft. Next, we discuss the limitations of this model (a linear model): most writers don't do things in order; they mix activities up. I then suggest that these activities fit best in a recursive model, and discuss how the computer can reinforce the recursive model.

The next phase of the activity requires students to brainstorm on the word processor. I usually give them one or two tips about the keyboard (the backspace key, the enter key, etc.) and give them a topic: "computers" is one of my favorites. After they have made a list of words on their screen, I show them a simple, five-step technique called "steamrolling" by which they can transform words in their list into sentences. The steps in "steamrolling" are as follows:

1. Find a word on the list you could use in a sentence;
2. move the cursor to the beginning of the word;
3. looking at the word, compose the sentence in front of it, steamrolling the word to the right across the page;
4. erase the word;
5. repeat steps 1-4.

By the time students have completed this repetitive process a number of times, the words on their screens will begin to resemble text instead of a list. There are a number of points I try to make to conclude the exercise. First, because they are writing their outline and their paper at the same time, they are not separating their thinking and their writing. There is a much less defined boundary between planning and producing. Second, steamrolling is repetitive; it helps them overcome writer's block. Finally, the technique is productive: they can produce papers and reports much more efficiently using steamrolling because they are working on organization much sooner in the process, and because they don't have to re-copy. The exercise works well because it is based on writing activities rather than functions of the word processor.

Word Processing Support for World-of-Work Writing

The primary concern for writers of world-of-work writing is adapting material to communicate with a reader. For this reason, clear organization and organization clearly indicated are major concerns. The types of word processing support described below are useful in helping students create well-organized reports, and also in laying them out clearly for readers.

Code Writing

Code writing is a form of writing described by Eric Brown in *Writing With a Word Processor* (Reston, VA: Reston Publishing Company). The idea with code writing is to make the layout of the information on the page reflect the organization of the information that the writer is trying to convey. In its simplest form, code writing means using headings to indicate shifts from one main idea to another. More complex forms of code writing include numbered lists, bulleted (black-dotted) lists, capitalized and underlined headings, and indentation of important passages. Stories and other narratives are often not code written: they appear in the standard, one-paragraph-after-another form. Instructions, informational brochures, and product descriptions, on the other hand, are often code written so that the reader can easily scan the content. The features of a new appliance, for instance, are usually *listed* rather than buried in a sentence.

File Systems

File systems are groups of files that writers use repeatedly, or that contain journal entries or notes. The purpose of file systems is to allow for easy building of documents or of previously prepared blocks of text. To use file systems, students need to know the functions of the word processor that allow them to retrieve or get other files stored on a disk directory. These functions allow students to bring a number of files together into one file, supposedly designed to become, with rearranging, a world-of-work document. It is useful, for example, to have students retrieve the same data file for two kinds of letters, and have them adjust the letter in some way to meet the demands of divergent audiences. For instance, they may have on their disk a description of an automobile's cooling system, which they would bring into two different letters: one for a customer (to explain repair procedures); and one for an attorney (to explain possible safety features).

Collaborative Revision

Collaborative revision simply means having students read one another's work using the perspective of the intended reader. In collaborative revision students are asked to take on the role of a customer or fellow employee in evaluating letters or reports. Opening up a student's work to the scrutiny of others is a valuable way to reinforce ideas of audience. It helps if readers are given guidelines and asked to write about their reading experience. It also helps if readers are shown how to be helpful and not overly critical in their reading. Students may practice revising on a one-to-one basis, or they may share perspectives in a small group setting. The word processor is a useful tool in group revision because the screen may be viewed by up to five people at the same time. The word processor allows for easy insertion of comments into a file: comments that the writer may later read and delete.

Templates

Templates are models for documents based on a study of how those documents are produced in the work place. The point of using templates is to help organize information in a transactional document. Brown, in *Writing with a Word Processor*, suggests four basic plans:

- Chronological or sequential: useful for organizing instructions or trip reports.
- Comparison-Contrast: useful for descriptions of mechanisms or sales material designed for product comparisons.
- Problem-Solution: useful for recommendation reports or proposals that grow out of a need for plans and information.
- Classification: useful for analytical writing where large amounts of data need to be organized.

In his book Brown develops a number of variations of these four plans as the basis for an even larger diversity of documents. It is easy for vocational-technical teachers to develop their own sets of templates for the kinds of documents they want students to write. For instance, in secretarial studies, negative adjustment letters follow clearly-specified plans. A teacher in this area might examine a number of these plans and derive a template such as the following:

- Good Will Statement
  (introducing the situation and thanking the reader for bringing the problem to the company's attention)
- Buffer Statement
  (explaining the company policy or other reasons on which the negative adjustment is made)
- Statement of Adjustment
  (stating the negative adjustment and offering alternatives)
- Resale Statement
  (re-establishing company good will and offering more information)

Models like this one can be developed in any vocational-technical class, based on the kinds of world-of-work writing the teacher is most familiar with. By focusing students' efforts on fitting information to logical structures like these we reinforce their need to organize information so readers can understand easily. The word processor is useful in this regard because it enables re-arrangement of ideas according to the logical pattern.

Sample Exercise for World-of-Work Writing: Code Writing

To reinforce the concept of logical patterns and reader recognition, I suggest the following exercise, which I adapted from Eric Brown, called code writing. Code writing, as Brown explains, is a way to "communicate plan and data before reading." By this we mean that the writer should use the physical arrangement on the page, usually called "layout" as a tool for reinforcing reader comprehension. This exercise requires some knowledge of word processor functions, because to perform it users need to know how to indent information from the left margin.

The exercise consists of two parts: 1) a demonstration of how layout can be used to reveal a writer's organization, and 2) an exercise in reformatting a block of text. To demonstrate how layout can be used to reveal a writer's organization, I distribute two versions of a document to the students, one in simple block form, and the other showing the same document re-formatted suing lists, numbers, and headings. I ask them to brainstorm on the differences between the two documents. Based on what they tell me, which I will record on the overhead or on the board, I guide the discussion towards the idea that formatted text communicates more readily than un-formatted text because the reader has to *read* the un-formatted text in order to figure out the organization. With formatted text the writer's organization is apparent before reading. The writer's organization may be referred to as a system of understanding, and the writer's task as teaching at system to the reader.

The second part of the exercise requires the students to try out their skill on a passage of text. I have had success using the following sample of student writing:

> *The Major Parts of a Stapler*
>
> *There are three major parts to the stapler: the base, the lower jaw, and the upper jaw. These three components are connected to the same hinge at the posterior point of the stapler. This hinge allows for three different functions. The base may be retracted ninety degrees from the lower jaw to allow the user to staple items on a flat surface. The hinge allows for the separation of the lower jaw from the upper jaw. This occurs so that the lower jaw may be loaded with staples. The recoil spring on the hinge brings the upper jaw back from the base when an item has been stapled. There is only one internal moving part inside the stapler. It is a spring found inside the lower jaw. This spring fits behind the row of staples to keep them proceeding forward every time a staple is pushed out.*

Because some students are not familiar with word processors, it is a good idea to start with the programs up and running, with the sample passage displayed on the screen. I review one or two simple format commands before starting, and then ask the students to study the passage for logical patterns. The object of the exercise is to use the word processor to reformat the paragraph so that the organization of the piece is visually clear.

There is no one answer to this exercise; in fact, divergent answers are desirable. The idea is to stimulate the students' ability to recognize patterns in text. This skill is invaluable when they begin to rework their own cognitive writing into transactional writing. During the follow-up to this exercise I try to reinforce the idea that writers need to be pattern finders in their own writing, and that the starting place is to learn to find patterns in others' work. I also emphasize that the document should be *recognizable* as well as readable: the reader should be able to tell at a glance that there are three parts, etc. It is best to respond to this exercise individually by going around the room, and to overlook the lack of skill in formatting that will inevitably crop up. The fine points of introducing, formatting, and structuring lists can be dealt with after the students grasp the concept of code writing and how it can increase reader recognition.

Conclusion

In the previous exercise in on-screen outlining, and in this one on code writing, we have seen how word processing can support both the writing-as-learning model and the world-of-work model of writing. In both these kinds of writing-intensive activities, the word processor can play a vital role: that of reinforcing a recursive model of writing. When we equip our students with the fundamentals of the recursive, or process-oriented, approach to writing, we supply tools that, later in their careers, can help them both analyze and communicate information about material in vocational-technical areas. Far from being merely a gimmicky approach to writing, word processing can thus be essential to their professional success. That students have some experience in this kind of thinking and writing should be a high priority for teachers in writing-intensive, vocational-technical classes.

Part Two

Balancing World-of-Work Writing and Writing-as-Learning Assignments

Chapter 4

Learning Business Through Writing

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As an Assistant Professor of Business Administration at Amarillo College in Amarillo, Texas, I began to realize that students needed more practice in writing than they were currently getting, specifically in business courses. My motivation increased when I heard Dr. Pat Cross, of Harvard School of Education, state:

> *It is quite clear now that the tendency of overworked teachers to reduce the student writing assignments in the 1960s and 70s was a step in the wrong direction. Although I would be the first to admit that student writing makes enormous time demands on conscientious teachers trying to provide useful feedback, I am convinced that writing assignments are one powerful way to involve students in their learning.*

I decided it was time to make some major changes in my own classes. The traditional straight-lecture class would be changed to one that emphasized writing as an integral part of business.

We as business teachers must prepare our students to work in professions in which technical knowledge is increasing at an exponential rate and written and oral skills are as important as technical skills. Accounting students, for example, must not only learn basic accounting concepts and techniques but must also learn how to acquire new knowledge on their own. They must be able not only to work with numbers but also to write extensive tax audit reports. A writing-across-the-curriculum program that includes Writing-as-Learning (WaL) assignments and World-of-Work (WoW) assignments can help address these needs.

In the spring semester of 1987 I converted my introduction to business classes to writing-intensive sections. Following is a short review of some assignments I used.

World-of-Work (WoW) Writing Assignments

My World of Work (WoW) writing assignments required students either to read and write about specific subjects that relate to issues or trends in the business world or to write the kinds of documents they will have to write after they graduate and are working professionals. For instance, students read articles about resumes and then write their own resume. These assignments are designed to (1) give practice in writing, (2) show that writing is important outside of English classes, and (3) produce a resume that could be used on a legitimate job interview.

The following is a list of WoW writing assignments I give to my students:

- Write a resume.
- Here is a job application form. Fill it out.
  [After the students have filled out the application forms, we discuss what they wrote correctly and incorrectly. I have them redo it until it is correct, and I encourage them to carry it in their billfold or wallet and use it as a guide when they fill out a job application for a real job.]
- Interview the person that has the job you most want. You can ask questions about the education requirements, the necessary written and oral communication skills, salary range, routine duties, etc. Write up your findings.
- Write a business letter to the person in business you most admire.
  [I have had students receive letters from Steven J. Jobs as well as other famous business persons. Their excitement lasted long after the assignment ended.]
- Write a biographical sketch about a person in business you admire.
- Read a book review of a current business book or a journal article and write a summary of it.
- Watch *Moneyline* on the Cable News Network and write an analysis of a current financial trend the program focuses on.
- Write a business proposal asking for a specific piece of equipment that the boss said you could not have unless you were willing to justify it.
- Write a business letter on my teaching and grading style.
  [I also write a letter back to the student. They appreciate this.]

Writing-as-Learning (WaL) Assignments

Writing-as-Learning (WaL) assignments help the student learn to think and write through a process of free-writing. On the first day of class, I have my students write their goals for the class. At mid-semester they write a one-page evaluation of their in-class performance. If their performance has not been satisfactory, they describe ways they can improve during the remainder of the semester.

WaL assignments are also used as review and feedback devices. Each day, students take notes on information presented in class. Then, at the end of the period, one student reads his or her notes to the class. Not only will this review the class for the students, but also it gives me the opportunity to determine if they are understanding the material presented in class. At the beginning of each class period, the students write for five minutes about the previous class presentations or about the material they read for that day's lecture. Students also write about specific aspects of the class. For example, following a presentation on forms of business ownership, sole proprietorships, franchises, partnerships, corporations, etc., students write for ten or fifteen minutes about the business structure that they would most want to be associated with. Following a presentation on the different types of leaders (autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire), students write a paragraph categorizing their boss and explaining why their boss is placed in this category. This assignment always evokes lively discussions as most students have definite opinions about their bosses.

WaL assignments can easily be integrated into quizzes and exams. For a pop quiz I write five or six key terms on the board and give the students five minutes to write a paragraph using all of the terms in that paragraph. Also, if students believe that the multiple choice or true-false questions on an exam are "ambiguous," they may write on a separate sheet of paper why they believe the question is unfair. If they convince me that the question is unfair, I give the class credit for it. Students have been known to call me a "human being" when I use this method. If the exam is difficult for the majority of the class, I have the entire class write how they would have written the exam. These kinds of WaL assignments help develop rapport and provide useful feedback.

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

One approach I used came to be called "The Good, Bad, and the Ugly." The class turned in a writing assignment, and then I graded it, picking the outstanding paper, the worst paper, and the paper that had the most mark-outs and mistakes. These three were duplicated (with students' names covered) and distributed to each student. Students now had a set of papers to compare their own papers with. They could see instantly the difference, and they had a much better understanding of my expectations. As a result, sixty percent of the class improved on the next writing assignment. Yes, sixty percent.

Conclusion

Implementing a writing-intensive course has been very encouraging. During the early part of the semester students were not enthusiastic. As the semester progressed and after several written assignments were completed, students became more positive about the increased writing they were doing in a business class. Their writing ability actually improved. My experiment taught me several lessons:

Keep assignments short. The technical report (major research paper of eight to ten pages) I had always assigned in the past was dropped. I realized freshmen students who had not taken English composition I and II were not ready for a technical report on the level I expected. Assignments are now shorter, consisting of two or three pages in length, and thus easier for the student to manage. I believe they are equally productive.

Insist on revision. I learned that students benefit tremendously when they are required to revise their same papers. Previously when I graded student writing and handed it back, most students looked at the grade, not my comments, or quickly forgot everything except the grade. But when I began requiring students to review their papers and turn them back in, their writing improved tremendously. The first class to submit resumes did a terrible job. I was shocked and surprised at the poor quality of work. Three separate handouts on how to write effective and successful resumes were given to the class, and the writing process was discussed extensively in class. When students revised their resumes, the improvement was amazing. The highlight of the resume assignment was the announcement by two students that they had been hired for "real jobs" in part because of their high quality resumes.

Call upon the expertise of English teachers. Students were also encouraged to view the English teacher as a consultant. They were encouraged to take their resumes, cover letters, assignments, etc. to one of the English teachers they know and have the teacher make suggestions for revisions before the assignments were handed in. This was a non-punitive method of bringing the students together with the English teachers and writing outside of the English class.

Write out the assignments to present them to the students. If you give students assignments in written form, they will take the work more seriously. In addition, this will help you to recognize potential problem areas.

Encourage efficient use of time. Students and most non-English faculty believe writing takes hours and hours. They become discouraged before they ever begin. However, instructors should encourage students to set aside thirty to forty minutes for writing because short blocks are easier and less threatening for students and non-English faculty who are out of the habit of writing. I found that using shorter time blocks has been instrumental for my students and myself in staying motivated. Increasing the amount of writing did not necessarily improve my students' writing. I developed several writing assignments that encouraged students to think of writing as a means of communication in the business world. They related to this in a positive way. Writing assignments would be worth students' time and should be graded. Students usually resented completing assignments where no grade was given.

Teachers must be willing to devote the extra time for preparation, reading, and grading. Implementing a writing-intensive course will take effort, but the rewards are worth that effort.

The business environment is increasingly competitive, and students who are going to succeed must understand and interpret complex relationships and have broader skills than are presently being taught. My major objective was to help students take an active approach to learning instead of a passive one. Students need encouragement and practice if they are to develop writing skills. Teachers must be supportive, understanding, and patient, and they must keep their perspective.

Editor's Commentary

Ina Midkiff-Kennedy achieved a strong balance between World-of-Work (WoW) and Writing-as-Learning (WaL) assignments in her business class, though she gave her own interpretations to the two categories. She defines as WoW assignments, for example, not only writings that assume the same forms as those used on the job, such as resumes and letters, but also writings that are based on reading about professional matters directly applicable to practical work situations, such as articles *about* resume writing and corporate structure. She also discovered that WaL assignments have the potential of helping teachers as well as students to learn, especially teachers who are looking for feedback about how to improve their classes.

One of Ina's best assignments was the one in which she asked students to write about their bosses. This built upon the natural tendency of workers to gossip about their working conditions, but it also reinforced concepts learned in class by having students relate those concepts to current experience outside of class. Since most vocational-technical students work while they attend school, this kind of assignment can be very effective. Any procedure discussed in class or in a textbook can be compared to experience in the work place.

The most frequent complaint of students about writing assignments is, "I don't know what you want." Ina gives the students a number of chances to compensate for misunderstanding assignments by allowing them to rewrite and by showing them, in her exercise on "the good, the bad, and the ugly," what constitutes a good response to a given assignment.

Many teachers may wonder how Ina is able to give so many assignments in a single class, the enrollment in which is often as high as fifty students. The key is that she keeps the papers short. The students are more comfortable with short papers, and the grading load seems much lighter since it is spread more evenly over the entire semester. Also, students get used to writing these frequent and manageable papers and have more chances to improve. The participants in our project have found that it is more effective to give ten one-page papers than it is to give one ten-page paper.

Chapter 5

Writing to Revitalize Child Development Courses

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> *Like singing, dancing and play, writing may be one of those activities that all children enjoy—and enjoy learning to do better—until all too often, they become discouraged or disinterested because something happens to inhibit their free and natural expression. And that something that happens can often be associated with education or training; it results in a loss of spontaneity, a painful self-consciousness of error, or a reluctance to perform and learn because of a perceived inability to achieve certain extrinsic standards. Writing is full of inhibition for most of us. Instead of asking why so few people learn to write well and to enjoy writing, we might ask why so many come not to enjoy it, and therefore lose the desire to engage in it.*
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> —Frank Smith, *Writing and the Writer*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1982.

These thoughts really affected me when I read them. I imagine the fact that I teach child development and have worked with many young children may personalize them even more. I was one who came not to enjoy writing. Luckily that feeling is changing due to the successes I have experienced with my students as I incorporate more writing into my classes.

I teach in the Child Development Department at San Antonio College. Many students who enroll in our courses are working on an Associate in Applied Science degree in Child Development in preparation for work in day care centers and preschool programs. Some are here because state-issued minimum standards for day-care centers stipulate that center employees obtain yearly hours of education related to working with young children. Others are here to do preparatory work to enable them to transfer to a four-year institution. There are also a few who choose an introductory course as an elective. Whichever group they fall into, I am one of the first to orient them to the discipline since I teach two sections of the introductory course each semester. This course, Child Growth and Development, has been designated by the college's Competency Program as a writing-intensive course. This means that at least 60% of the course grade will derive from written assignments. Course content includes:

1. Theories of child development

2. Prenatal development

3. Birth and the newborn

4. Physical development, cognitive language development, social and emotional development for:
    a. infancy and toddlerhood
    b. the preschool years
    c. the school-age child

Exposure to writing across the curriculum principles has added a new dimension to my teaching. More importantly, the assignments that I generate seem to be assisting students in the development of thinking skills. I use the concepts Benjamin Bloom's *Taxonomy of the Cognitive Domain* (Handbook I, "Cognitive Domain." New York: Longman, 1956) as I create and revise formal assignments. His theory includes six hierarchical levels of thinking: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

Informal Writing Assignments

Two kinds of informal writing assignments were given in the course: journals and description.

Journals

Students are required to maintain an academic journal. I check this journal periodically, and it comprises 1/5 of the course grade. This journal is primarily used for students' personal reactions to class content. Journal assignments are broken into two categories: directed and undirected entries. Directed entries deal with things that I require them to respond to. Undirected entries are unsolicited comments, thoughts, opinions, and questions that they may add as they progress through the course. Whenever I ask the students to write something in class, I make it a practice to also write in my own journal in response to the same assignment. The fact that I take writing seriously is important.

Here are eight sample "directed" journal entry assignments:

Draw a picture of a good or bad memory from your early childhood years. [This is an idea borrowed from Agnes Robinson, El Paso Community College.]

Write a letter to a close friend or relative describing the memory picture that you drew.

Write your responses to the film we just watched. [This is a great way to encourage students to organize their thoughts before the class discussion of the film.]

Write about how you would care for yourself if you were pregnant (or how you want want your wife to care for herself). Why would you make these choices?

Write an observation of the child's cognitive behaviors in the following videotape.

Comment on how the theorists we have discussed would analyze the following behaviors.

Explain why you like a favorite teacher from your elementary years.

Comment on today's class—what you liked, disliked, didn't understand, etc.

"Potato" Description

One of my favorite preliminary writing assignments requires the students to write descriptions of potatoes. Dr. Curtis Hayes from the University of Texas at San Antonio introduced me to the value of bringing spuds into the classroom. I've incorporated potato-watching into the following assignment.

Objective. To assist students in writing specific and objective observations of children.

Conditions. This is the first in a series of three assignments. First, the potato observation exercise is completed. Second, the students write an observation of a child from a videotape. Finally, they observe a child in a natural setting. They are instructed to write about the potato on a blank sheet of paper and not to put their name on it.

Assignment: Students are asked to select a potato from a bag and write a detailed description of it. When they are finished I divide the class into groups of approximately eight students each. Students in each group place their potatoes on a table, exchange papers within the group, and then try to match each potato with its description.

Potential Problems. There are always descriptions which are not specific enough, causing problems for some students in locating the correct potato. When this happens, the student who wrote the description must re-write it. It doesn't take long for students to realize that they did not write specifically enough but instead wrote about general qualities that are common to most potatoes ("it is brown"; "it has indentations"; "it has cell structures on the skin").

Benefits. Not only is this assignment great fun, but using it as a first step in developing observation skills seems to work. Being able to write specific and objective observations is a skill that is integral to the discipline of Child Development.

Informal assignments and journal entries are not graded for form and mechanics. This type of writing is intended to give students practice in the process of getting their thoughts on paper. I do not want them to feel the wrath of misspellings and grammatical errors as they do these particular tasks. Fulwiler (1987) provides a good argument for this stance and also provides excellent guidelines for using academic journals in the classroom.

Formal Writing Reports

My goal is to have the students do four formal written reports during the semester. During my first semester of incorporating more writing into the curriculum, I only managed to squeeze in three. I found that I had to sacrifice coverage of some content as a result of additional writing requirements. I'll discuss more about the balance between coverage and written assignments in the Conclusion section.

Each formal report is valued at 1/10 of the course grade. A formal report is graded for content, form, and mechanics (spelling, grammar, and punctuation).

Students follow a process that leads up to the final product. Too much pressure is placed on the writing process when our charges are given formal assignment guidelines, a due date, and then the final report is the first product we as teachers see. The process I use consisted of these five steps:

STEP 1: Information which is the basis for the report is read and discussed. This step employs the knowledge level of Bloom's *Taxonomy*.

STEP 2: An interview or observation assignment is given where the student obtains specific information as outlined by the instructor. This phase operates to gather information for the report. It incorporates the comprehension and application levels of Bloom's *Taxonomy*.

STEP 3: The student is given the guidelines for the formal report. These require the student to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate both the information gained in #1 and that which was collected in #2. Analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating are the last three levels of Bloom's taxonomy of thinking.

STEP 4: The student is required to submit a preliminary draft of the report. For the first two formal reports, this draft is reviewed by the instructor. A peer evaluation is done for the third assignment. I use a peer evaluation form developed by Dr. Jeanette Harris of Texas Tech University's English Department. (A sample form is given in Dr. Harris's chapter on evaluating and responding to student writing.) By the fourth assignment I have the students do a self-evaluation with the help of a form which I provide. The primary problem that I encountered with the preliminary draft requirement is that many students did not seem to put much effort into the draft phase since they knew it was not the final product. They knew that they would receive recommendations on how to improve the report. On the suggestion of Dr. Jimmie Killingsworth of Texas Tech, I now plan to give a grade for the draft, a grade for the final report, and then average them together for the actual grade for each formal assignment. This will help emphasize the importance of the first draft.

As I review the first drafts, I make comments on how the student can improve the paper's content. I also indicate mechanical errors, but I don't explain them or correct them.

STEP 5: The student then composes a final product and submits it along with the draft and the preliminary interview or observation. I also give the students the option of asking me to review a second draft prior to the final due date.

The final product is graded for mechanics as well as for content. In fact an *Innovation Abstracts* that I read (S. Parman, "The Film Essay As An Educational Device," *Innovation Abstracts*, vol. VI, no. 26, 1984) inspired my development of a "Policy for Written Work Submitted" which I have been using with all my classes for the past few years. This policy not only follows the often used procedure of penalizing students for mechanical errors in their papers, but also rewards students for a job well done. This idea is the result of a basic principle of child development—catch them being good! This is the system:

POLICY FOR WRITTEN WORK SUBMITTED

Writing the English language is an important skill which must be mastered by students enrolled in Child Development courses at the college level. Not only must we be good models for children, but we must be credible in our communications with parents, professionals and all other adults with whom we come in contact. Correct spelling, grammar and punctuation should be a goal in your written assignments. Your instructor will be grading these elements in your formal written assignments. Points will be added to or subtracted from all written work as follows:

TO EARN EXTRA POINTS (up to 10%):
Your work does not have any misspelled words. If there are one, two or three misspelled words, no extra points are given, but none are deducted.

You write in grammatically correct sentences and use correct punctuation. If there are one, two or three different errors, no extra points are given, but none are deducted.

Both of the above conditions must be met in order to get the full extra 10%.

TO LOSE POINTS (up to 20%)
10%. . . Your paper contains more than three different misspelled words.

10%. . . You write in grammatically incorrect sentences or use incorrect punctuation (more than three different errors).

Any paper with an excessive number of errors will be returned to the student with a grade of "incomplete." The definition of "excessive number of errors" will be left to the discretion of the instructor. In order to get a grade, the "incomplete" paper must be turned in with the corrected work at the next class meeting. A deduction of 10% will be made as a penalty for re-grading.

The best policy, of course, is DO IT RIGHT THE FIRST TIME !

Interview

Now that I have outlined the process that I follow, I will give a couple of examples of specific assignments I have used successfully. The first assignment seems to prove to be fairly interesting for most students. It involves an interview of someone who gave birth over 20 years ago.

Objective. Students will compare past practices with present research and practices in regard to either prenatal care or the birth process. The student will incorporate this information into an article for expectant parents which highlights recommendations for prenatal care or the birth process.

As we start to discuss conception and prenatal development (STEP 1), students are given the first written leg of the assignment, which is a set of interview questions.

STEP 2 of this assignment is an interview:

Interview a woman who gave birth twenty or more years ago. Ask this person to discuss the birth of one particular child, using the questions below as guidelines for the interview. Avoid yes/no answers. Feel free to add any additional information that you think fits in with the assignment!

1. When did she give birth to the child discussed? How many other children did she have at the time? What were their ages?
2. Who provided the information given to the mother about how to care for herself during pregnancy, and what to expect during childbirth?
3. Describe specifically the type of information she received about care for herself during pregnancy, and what to expect in childbirth. Was she told about any precautions she should take? Was she given any nutrition information? Was she advised to exercise?
4. Describe in detail the prenatal care she received. Include the number of visits to the doctor. Explain what took place during the office visits.
5. Describe any problems she experienced during her pregnancy.
6. Where did she deliver (home, hospital, etc.) and why was this location chosen?
7. Was the husband/father present during the labor and delivery? Why or why not? If he was present, what was his role in the labor/delivery process? If he was present, what were his feelings about the entire experience?
8. Was anesthesia used during labor? If yes, what type was used (general, local, etc.)? Did the mother have any options about the use of anesthesia and the type used?
9. By what method was the baby delivered (vaginal, caesarean, breech, etc.)? If a caesarean was done, explain why it was done. Describe any problems associated with the delivery.
10. How long did she remain in the hospital? Why? If she delivered at home or a location other than a hospital, how long was she confined to bed rest? Why?
11. Describe the amount and type of contact the mother and the father had with the baby during the first few days after the birth.
12. What were her overall feelings about the pregnancy and delivery? Is there anything about this pregnancy and/or delivery she would change if she could? Were there any aspects of this pregnancy and delivery that she was particularly pleased with?

Since this interview is strictly the gathering of information, I do not always opt to review it before giving the next part of the assignment. Students usually enjoy this interview and we discuss in class the information that they collected. They often interview their own mothers. The interview is submitted together with the first draft of the formal report.

The guidelines for the formal report are given to students on the day that the interviews are completed (STEP 3):

PRENATAL CARE OR THE BIRTH PROCESS REPORT

Length: 2-3 typewritten or 3-6 handwritten pages
Audience: A group of prospective parents
Due: 1st draft is due ____________________
Final paper is due ____________________
Special Instruction: Write this as an article that will be included in a newsletter for expectant parents.

You are asked to write an article for a newsletter that is published locally and distributed to obstetrician's offices throughout Bexar county. The editor has asked you to do a comparison of past and present in regard to either prenatal care or the birth process. You will use the information from your prenatal/birth process interview as the basis for the material you will present on past practices. Use the information from your textbook and lectures to write about the current trends in prenatal care or the birth process. Be sure to

1. devise a catchy title for the article;
2. try to capture the reader's interest in the opening paragraph;
3. develop the article by supplying relevant comparisons and facts; and
4. conclude the article with a summary paragraph.

REMEMBER, YOU HAVE A CHOICE OF WRITING THE ARTICLE ABOUT PRENATAL CARE OR THE BIRTH PROCESS.

Potential Problems. I have found that I need to emphasize that this is to be written as an article for a newsletter rather than as an essay to me, the instructor. There are always a few students who write about both prenatal development and the birth process. There were also some who omit discussing past practices that were followed by the person whom they interviewed. As a result, I have become more emphatic with my directions.

Benefits. This assignment seems to be the toughest since it is the first piece of formal writing. The fact that a draft has to be submitted seems to put more weight on the assignment in the student's eyes. I have surmised this from the comments they make. This assignment also gives the students practice in writing for a newsletter. Many child care centers and preschools do in fact print monthly newsletters for their parents. One last benefit is that the students definitely know about prenatal care and the birth process by completion of the assignment. This is information that every prospective parent should be aware of and many of these students will become parents in the future.

Observation

The other assignment that I will share includes an observation of children as its basis. There are two other formal assignments which also incorporate direct observations of children.

Objective. The student will record information in response to a directed observation of an infant or toddler. The student will then organize this information into a progress report by comparing this child's development with what is considered normal for the child's age. The student will assess whether or not the child is developing on schedule.

Conditions. The initial observation is given to students after we have discussed how to write observations. An explanation is given in class of each area of development which is to be observed.

The observation that must be completed prior to the formal report for this assignment follows:

OBSERVATION: THE INFANT AND TODDLER

DIRECTIONS: Observe one child between the ages of nine months and three years (not over 36 months) for at least thirty minutes. Observe the child for each of the listed behaviors/skills. Record information that describes the child's quality or level of the skill; that is, describe how the child does things rather than saying just "yes" or "no" to each item. If unable to observe a particular behavior/skill, a parent's or caregiver's statement may be recorded for the answer. Be sure to indicate such answers as "reported by _(relationship to child)_."

If you are in direct contact with your chosen subject, there is a possibility that the child may be uncomfortable with you. If this is the case, ask the child's parent or caregiver to work with the child. Let the child attempt each task several times before you make a determination as to skill level. Discontinue testing if the child seems to be bored or distracted. You can try again a different time.

Read each item carefully for specific directions. Pages in the textbook are given as references for your observations.

RECORD THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION CONCERNING THE CHILD YOU ARE OBSERVING:
First name of child: ____________________
Gender: Male ________ Female ________
Age of child: ________ years and ________ months

1. GROSS MOTOR DEVELOPMENT
   Observe skills such as sitting, standing alone, walking, standing on one foot, climbing, going up and down stairs. See pages 196-99, 227-30.

2. FINE MOTOR DEVELOPMENT
   Observe children using construction toys, puzzles, crayons, cups, other small toys, etc. Note how the child uses fingers and hand in manipulating. See pages 197, 200, 201, and 227-30.

3. OBJECT PERMANENCE (Cognitive Development)
   Observe and describe the child's behavior in relation to object permanence. What is the child's reaction when an object is partially hidden? When it is hidden completely? See pages 240, 244, and 246.

4. PLAY BEHAVIOR (Cognitive Development)
   Observe at least two examples of the child's play behavior. See pages 263-64.

5. LANGUAGE SKILLS
Describe the child's language behavior. Include at least two samples of the child's language. See pages 251-57 and 262-63.

6. SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT
   (a) Observe how the child reacts to you if you are a stranger or get a caregiver report as to how the child reacts to strangers, citing some specific situations. See pages 296-98.

   (b) Are there any people, objects, or pets the child is particularly attached to? See pages 281-83.

   (c) Describe emotions that the child exhibited during the time that you observed him or her (anger, fear, happiness, sadness, affection, jealousy, etc.). Describe the behavior(s) that was displayed to indicate the emotion. See pages 296-300.

The formal assignment based on this observation follows. Once again, students do an initial rough draft and submit it prior to the final report.

OBSERVATION REPORT: THE INFANT AND TODDLER

Length: 1 typewritten page or 2-3 handwritten pages
Audience: Day care center staff and child's parents
Special instructions: See below

You are assigned to analyze one major area of development for the infant or toddler who you observed (physical or cognitive/language development). Use your observation information along with the text and lecture notes to complete this report.

The child you observed has just enrolled in your class at the ________________________ (think of an original name!) day care center. According to the *Minimum Standards* for day care centers, Section 42.045: "A person who operates a licensed or certified facility shall maintain individual child development records. . ." In order to meet this requirement and to facilitate curriculum planning for the child, you need to write a report on one developmental area. This report will be shared with the parents and a copy of it will be placed in the child's file maintained by the center.

You will need to include the following information at the beginning of your report:

- Name of the day care center
- Child's name
- Gender of child
- Age of child
- Date and time you observed the child
- A description of the setting for your observation

The body of this report should be in a narrative form. Discuss the skills you observed and do a comparative analysis of how this child's performance compares to what you have learned about normal development from your book and/or class discussion. A sample comparative analysis is provided below.

EXAMPLE: FINE MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

Observed behaviors: Janie, age 2 years and 6 months, selected a puzzle from the shelf and placed it on a table. She turned the puzzle over, using both hands, so that the pieces would fall out. She took each of the four pieces with her thumb and forefinger of her right hand and placed them into the correct separated spaces (this was not an interlocking puzzle). She put each piece into the correct space on the first or second try. Janie also used her right hand to hold a crayon for coloring. She grasped the large crayon tightly with a fist-like grip and scribbled circles on the paper.

Comparative analysis: According to *Child Development* by A. Christine Harris, a child should have a pincer grasp by the age of 9-15 months; Janie demonstrated a pincer grasp when handling the puzzle pieces. She colors using a fist grip, but children do not normally hold a crayon with their fingers until age 3. In looking at these specific behaviors we can conclude that Janie is within the normal range of development for eye-hand coordination.

As the above assignment indicates, students will be writing comparative analyses in relation to either cognitive/language or physical development. In their third formal report, they must focus on the area(s) not chosen for this report. For example, if they assessed cognitive/language development in this assignment, they must assess physical development in their third report. In the fourth formal report, student are required to assess social/emotional development. Therefore, students will have the opportunity to address each area of development, though each of these three observation-based formal reports will look at different age groups of children.

Potential Problems. One problem is that the students might not complete the preliminary observation correctly at first. Some students are still not specific enough in recording information about the child's behaviors. Another problem is that a few students copy the example as part of their own papers. Usually the students who do either of these are slower students who have been absent on days when vital information was presented.

Benefits. The benefits of this assignment are obvious. Anyone who works in a teaching capacity with young children should be able to determine how a child is developing and progressing in that development. Teachers of young children are required to maintain records of children's development and periodically meet with parents to discuss their progress. Teachers must be familiar with each major area of a child's development in order to plan developmentally appropriate activities for the age group he or she is working with.

Conclusion

Writing is used in most college-level courses across the curriculum to ask students to communicate learned information to their instructors. The instructors are the target audience, and the purpose of the writing is to communicate knowledge rather than to generate it. When this is the case, an important role of the writing process has been greatly overlooked. According to experts in the field of writing across the curriculum, "an individual's language is crucial in discovering, creating, and formulating ideas as well as in communicating their substance to others" (Toby Fulwiler, *Teaching With Writing*, Montclair, N. J.: Boynton/Cook, 1987). Formal writing in occupational-technical courses such as Child Growth and

Development should be aimed at teaching the students to write appropriately in real life situations that will be encountered after leaving the academic setting.

Implementing these additional writing assignments means extra work for me as well as the students, but it is rewarding. Initially I have had to sacrifice some of the content of the course as I have restructured all of the assignments. The payoff is that the students are really learning the material that we do cover since I have more opportunities to discover the gaps in their comprehension. I find that I am catching up with the content as I become more experienced with this new approach. I'm confident that it won't be long before I will have time to cover all of the material and assignments as originally planned.

Writing assignments in vocational-technical courses don't have to be yet another series of chores; they can revitalize one's teaching. Better yet, they can help our students to become better communicators. Perhaps they will even rediscover some of the joys of writing.

Editor's Commentary

One of the major discoveries Ellen Marshall made for herself was the reward that comes from writing with students. For many vocational-technical teachers, writing is not enjoyable; their assignments of student writing may be adversely affected by this distaste. Overcoming an early fear of writing, Ellen has blossomed into a fine writer who enjoys the work, and this reinforces her ability to help students with their assignments. Journal writing is an especially effective way of joining students in the writing process.

Another major discovery was the application of Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive goals, an extremely influential and widely used scheme, which is well adapted to the writing-as-learning model. Ellen's insightful pairing of the taxonomy with the goals of writing across the curriculum is a good example of how teachers can bring together concepts and practices that are already in place at the school where they teach and make them work in new contexts. This kind of inventiveness allows the teacher to maintain familiar ground while radically reforming classroom practices.

Ellen's mix of formal and informal assignments, journal writing and reports, gives the students a chance to get used to writing in assignments uncramped by rules and regulations before they move on to reports that must be of professional quality. They write all of their work in increments, so that the task is never overwhelming. Some of Ellen's assignments are closely structured, providing the students with what psychologists call "well-formed problems." These are to be preferred when the teacher wants a definite outcome—when, for example, the teacher wants the students to commit to memory a specific set of procedural or factual data. Other assignments, however, such as the undirected entries in the journal, are "ill-formed problems," which allow the students themselves to articulate the problems as well as the solutions to major questions regarding the subject matter of the course. This kind of assignment encourages creativity and insight. The goal of the teacher should be to balance the two approaches.

Chapter 6

From Visualization to Communication: Writing in an Interior Design Course

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When I first heard of "writing across the curriculum," I thought of a project that required students to write long essays and term reports. I thought students could probably benefit from additional writing because they wrote only a few papers while in school. But while I believed that students could use more practice to develop their writing skills, I didn't believe it was my responsibility to teach them how to write. I had more than enough work teaching the basic principles of interior design and keeping up with all the new developments in the field.

My experience in teaching a writing-intensive class in residential interiors helped me realize that I could teach more effectively with the aid of writing and that the writing assignments could be fun and interesting as well as educational for me and my students.

I am an instructor at Texas State Technical Institute in Amarillo in the Interior Design Technology Department, which is accredited by the Foundation of Interior Design Education and Research. Our program offers an Associate of Applied Arts Degree with a Professional Certificate in Interior Design. Our students are mostly from the Amarillo area and their average age is thirty. The program offers students in Interior Design as many hands-on experiences in the field as is feasibly possible in the three-year program.

The purpose of incorporating writing assignments in my Residential Interiors course was twofold: to enable students to use writing as a way of learning course materials and to help students increase their general literacy and fluency in writing.

The Course

The major project in the course is to design a complete residential interior from a floor plan and a client profile. The student, through study and application, creates a residential environment that promotes the growth and development of a household with consideration of the physical, intellectual, moral, and spiritual characteristics of the family. The writing assignments relate to a statement of the design concept, specifications for furniture, estimates of costs, and schedules for acquiring furniture and furnishing each room of the client's home.

The statement of the design concept is presented in writing and explains the thought processes and ideas influencing the design judgments made in the project. The students convert their oral presentations into simple and concise sentences.

The specifications for furniture, the schedules for material and room completions, and some of the estimates of costs are completed in tabular form. Even completing relatively simple forms required students to use appropriate interior design language.

During my first attempt to teach the course using writing-intensive methods, two students completed the course, which allowed me to give individual attention to each one. Both students were female. One was white, 33 years old, and was articulate, confident, and energetic. The other was approximately the same age, Vietnamese, and relatively unfamiliar with American customs and the English language. She had communication problems and was very quiet. They made an interesting combination. The Vietnamese student gained considerably more knowledge in the class because she had more to learn and also learned from the other student. This situation allowed the white student the opportunity to communicate thoughts and actions to someone else besides her teacher.

The Statement of Design Concept

The design concept statement, which describes the student's processes behind the development of a specific residential design, consists of three tasks. They are explained to the student as follows:

Task 1:	After reading the attached concept statement, rewrite on the enclosed sheet the concept statement using the guidelines set forth in the learning guide and VCR tape. Your revision of the concept statement is to be written or typed in a neat and legible manner.
Task 2:	Obtain from the instructor a remodeled floor plan. Write a concept statement using the guidelines set forth in the learning guide and VCR tape. Your concept statement is to be written or typed in a neat and legible manner. Present the design concept orally to the class or the instructor.
Task 3:	Using your final project for IDT 224, Introduction to Interior Architecture, write a concept statement using the guidelines set forth in the learning guide and VCR tape. Your concept statement is to be written or typed in a neat and legible manner. Present the design concept orally to the class or the instructor.

The first task, which required students to revise a design concept statement, assisted them in understanding what such a statement entailed. It also gave students the opportunity to rewrite the statement to make it clearer and more concise. To give students practice in originating a design concept statement before writing one for their final project, students developed design concept statements for two more rooms. Both students did well on the assignments. The Vietnamese student wrote as she talked, in broken English; the other had minimal problems with the assignment.

This assignment benefitted the students by requiring them to explain their reasoning that led to their design decision.

The Furniture Schedules

The furniture schedule is a form that students use to describe the furniture selected for the design project. Students must describe the furniture so that readers are able to visualize each piece from its description. Students complete these three writing tasks:

Task 1: Obtain from the instructor a group of pictures of furniture and complete a furnishings schedule according to the guidelines set forth in the learning guide and VCR tape. The furniture schedule form to be completed is attached. Your furniture schedule is to be written or typed in a neat and legible manner.

Task 2: Using the attached floor plan, complete a furniture schedule according to the guidelines set forth in the learning guide and VCR tape. Your furniture schedule is to be written or typed in a neat and legible manner.

Task 3: Using tasks 1 and 2, read the furniture schedule to the class or the instructor while they draw the pieces of furniture from your description.

After learning the appropriate vocabulary for describing furniture, the students described the furniture shown in a picture of a room. They then wrote a furniture schedule from a floor plan, which required them to visualize furniture and then express that visualization in writing so that someone else would be able to identify the piece of furniture from their description. Finally, to test the clarity of their descriptions, the students read them aloud to someone else who attempted to draw the furniture from their description.

Writing the furniture schedules enabled the students to practice merging visualization, vocabulary, writing, and drawing into one communicative activity.

Schedules for Room Finish and Finish Material

The room finish and finish material schedules, which are tabular forms, explain to the builder and client how a room is to be completed and what it will look like. Students prepare the following four assignments:

Task 1: On the attached room finish schedule, complete the schedule for Room 206 in the IDT Department.

Task 2: Using the attached floor plan and room finish schedule, complete the schedule for the floor plan.

Task 3: Using the attached finished material schedule, complete a schedule for Room 206 in the IDT Department.

Task 4: Using the attached material schedule and floor plan, complete a schedule for the floor plan.

The room finish and finish material schedules are similar forms. To help students distinguish between the forms, they completed a room finish and a finish material schedule for the same room. These assignments continued to help students learn to convert their observations and concepts into writing so that others could also visualize the items.

Conclusion

Most concepts in interior design are highly visual. These concepts can be projected by drawing, which is a very necessary skill for persons entering the profession. However, the emphasis on drawing skills often causes writing skills to be underdeveloped, which is unfortunate because interior designers also need to know how to explain plans, specifications, and schedules in writing. Being proficient in both drawing and writing provides our graduates with more conceptualizing and communication skills to offer in the professional world.

I feel that making my residential interiors course writing intensive by requiring several, mostly informal, writing assignments, helped these two students achieve beyond the level of students in previous classes. Although there were only two students in this class, their very different backgrounds allowed me to observe the effects of a writing-intensive course on different types of students.

Editor's Commentary

Barbara Farnon had to overcome a common misconception before she was able to see how writing could be useful in her interior design classroom. She had to learn that she did not have to "teach writing" in order to *use* writing as a teaching device. In fact, if you do help students to get their ideas on paper and to shape those ideas according to what you know about appropriate formats in your field—if you work with the students as Barbara has done—then you *are* teaching writing, almost in spite of yourself. But you are not necessarily doing the kinds of teaching that we associate with the English class. The participants in our project varied in the amount of attention they gave to matters like grammar and sentence formation. Some of them used the traditional English essay; some did not. They all gave the students what they knew about writing, and they often found they knew more than they thought they knew.

In fields like Interior Design, in which the visual sense is very important, the teacher can, as Barbara discovered, enhance cognitive development by having the students alternate between visual and verbal expression of their ideas. This will help students to generalize about their work, so that they do not have to "re-invent the wheel" every time they go to work visually on a new design problem. (Theorists teach that our visual perception tends to work best in specific situations, while our symbolic capabilities—our language skills, for example—allow us to build bridges from one situation to the next.) In addition, pre-professional students must learn to do more than *see* and *understand* a good design, they must also *communicate* what they see and *sell* their design to the customer. Assignments like the ones Barbara used are highly effective in preparing occupational students for the world of work.

Chapter 7

A Medical-Surgical Nursing Class Participates in Writing Across the Curriculum

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Odessa College offers a two-year associate degree program in nursing with two exit levels, one for the vocational nurse, the other for the registered nurse. Our students are characteristically older females who have finished rearing their families and now find they have the opportunity to pursue a postponed dream.

When I decided to participate in the West Texas Writing Across the Curriculum Project, I knew that NU 1903, Care of the Patient with Unstable Health Conditions II, would be ideal for this project. This course is offered in the third semester of the nursing program. After successful completion of this course, the student is eligible to exit at the vocational nurse level and to take the State Board Examination for Vocational Nursing.

I have always felt a great sense of accountability when I taught this course. Upon completion of NU 1903, these students are eligible to seek employment as graduate vocational nurses. I need to be assured that they are not only knowledgeable, but also safe practitioners. What better way to assess their knowledge than to require written assignments that help me assist students to identify learning weaknesses?

Writing Assignments

The three writing assignments used in NU 1903 were weekly care plans, comparison papers, and reaction papers.

Weekly Care Plan

The weekly care plan, a demanding assignment, is required in every nursing course in our program. I did, however, change my thinking about my expectations of this assignment as a result of having participated in this project. I expanded the assignment and required that it be done for a numerical grade.

Objective. The purpose of the weekly care plan was to assist students to adequately prepare themselves to give care to a client in the clinical setting (hospital). I decided to require the student to give me the rationale for the lab work, diagnostic tests, and treatments as it specifically pertained to the student's client. Also emphasized was the necessity to correlate medications ordered with the client's medical diagnosis. Finally, I required students to turn in a copy of their legal documentation (nurse's notes).

Conditions. The student was initially introduced to this writing assignment on clinical orientation day. I explained to the student that, without this preliminary research, he or she would not be permitted to give nursing care in the clinical setting. Written guidelines for this assignment were provided in the course syllabus. The student was told that a numerical grade would be given for this assignment. The average of the grades for these weekly care plans would constitute 35% of the student's total course grade.

Assignment. The weekly care plans that students wrote were based on the following directions:

> One weekly care plan will be required on a client you have cared for in the clinical setting. The care plan will be graded on the following areas:
>
> I. Research Data (10 points)
>
> A. Medical Diagnosis (Define and Explain)
> B. Signs and Symptoms (Underline those symptoms which pertain to your client.) Lab Work and Treatments (20 points)
>
> Discuss the significance of lab work results as it relates to your client's condition. Correlate treatments to your client's diagnosis.
>
> III. Medications (15 points)
>
> Discuss classification, average dosage range for a 24-hour period, adverse side effects, and nursing implications. (7.5 points will be subtracted if you fail to correlate drugs to your client's condition.)
>
> IV. Documentation (25 points)
>
> Submit a duplicate of your nurse's notes. Include a head-to-toe assessment and any pertinent observations related to you client's diagnosis and condition.
>
> V. Care Plan (30 points)
>
> Include nursing diagnosis, client goals, nursing interventions and evaluation. Prioritize your nursing diagnosis according to *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs* and *Erickson's Developmental States of Man.*

Potential Problems. At first I found this writing assignment to be overwhelming not only for the students, but also for me. My inclination was to cross every "t" and dot every "i" on the students' weekly care plans. However, out of self-preservation, I started to pay less attention to the mechanics of the papers and more to the students' thought processes. As the semester progressed, I found grading the papers to be less cumbersome.

Benefits. Two big advantages resulted from this writing assignment. First, it allowed me to assess the student's ability to correlate classroom theory with a real-life clinical situation. This gave me the opportunity to help the student identify and strengthen areas of weakness. When I identified a deficit in a particular area of knowledge, I would write a "Study Prescription" in which I would recommend methods to strengthen weak areas. Second, the student was required to do extensive research on topics that were not always covered in class content. Former graduates have shared with me that had it not been for the efforts they had invested in weekly care plans, they would not have been as well prepared to take state boards.

Comparison Paper

Objective. The students were required to write a research paper on two diseases in which they were asked to compare pathophysiology, signs and symptoms, diagnostic studies, treatment and nursing interventions.

Conditions. This assignment was used whenever I felt a particular subject was especially difficult for the students. Students were asked to follow standard guidelines for a written assignment found in the *Student Handbook*, which was provided in the first nursing course.

Assignment. The comparison and contrast papers that the students wrote were based on these directions:

> Write a paper in which you compare and contrast Acute Pyelonephritis with Nephrotic Syndrome. [I used this particular assignment when teaching the Renal Unit.] Your paper should address the following areas:
>
> - etiology
> - pathophysiology
> - signs and symptoms
> - diagnostic studies
> - treatments (Include medications and nutrition.)
> - nursing interventions
> - prognosis

Benefits. This exercise seemed to help the independent learner most. Because of the poor quality of the papers, I still had to cover the content in class. However, the written assignment did provide, for the students, the necessary preparation for a more productive class discussion.

Reaction Paper

Objective. The purpose of this paper was to get the student to reflect on his or her own feelings, perceptions, and ideas about a particular topic.

Conditions. I would assign this kind of writing exercise whenever I wanted the student to reflect on a specific experience, especially one that was likely to elicit strong emotions. For example, I required a reaction paper when students attended a workshop on child abuse. I also required a reaction paper from a student who had had his first experience with a dying client.

Assignment. The assignment on reaction papers were based on the following directions:

> Explain in your own words, your feelings about what the lawyer discussed concerning potential areas of liability in your documentation. [I required this assignment after the class had attended a workshop on "Legal Issues and Nursing Documentation."]

Potential Problems I had a difficult time getting students to discuss their feelings. At first the students would write a synopsis of the workshop or conference. They failed to get in touch with their own feelings.

Benefits. Students learned the difference between a summary statement which requires close observation and reproduction of details, and a reaction paper, which requires more critical thinking and attention to cognitive processes. I learned about my students as people. This assignment allowed me to see a side of the shy student that I don't think I otherwise would have seen. In some instances, it allowed the student to gain meaningful insight into themselves which, I believe, added to their own personal and professional growth.

Conclusion

I found participation in writing across the curriculum a very beneficial experience. First, it made me look critically at the teaching techniques I had previously used. My initial response was that I would never find the time to read all the papers I had originally proposed. However, once I "recovered" from the need to look at every paper with a microscope, I found that skimming the papers for ideas and content could be done fairly quickly and still be of benefit to the student.

The predominant complaint from students was that I had required too much from them. However, in all honesty, this was a complaint I had heard many times before, even when I did not require writing.

As a result of my participation in this writing-across-the-curriculum project, I have permanently changed some of my teaching tactics. The biggest change that this experience has brought about is my awareness of the students' need to express themselves on paper without having to be overly concerned with the mechanics of the paper. Inadvertently I found students' writing abilities to improve just by the mere fact that writing was required more often.

Editor's Commentary

Irma Aguilar's greatest discovery in her experimental writing-intensive nursing course was the power of writing assignments to demonstrate to the teacher and to the students themselves how much knowledge they have on a given topic. Though many teachers immediately recognize this advantage of classroom writing, they do not always progress as far as Irma did in putting the advantage to use. Too often they will simply assess the amount of knowledge demonstrated, assign a grade, and end the process of learning at that point. But Irma pointed the way to further learning through her use of "study prescriptions," which she issued to each student in writing, thereby preserving the flow of written discourse between herself and the students and keeping alive the learning process.

Moreover, by assigning research papers, Irma found that she could extend the learning of the students beyond the scope of the classroom. Teachers who fear that they will waste valuable class time by making writing assignments should take comfort in Irma's discovery that writing *increases* the amount of material that can be covered to prepare students for state board examinations (a major concern for many occupational teachers and students).

She also learned that even papers that some teachers would consider "failures" can be useful in the classroom. They can stimulate excellent classroom discussions based on topics with which the students have already struggled and for which they have developed at least a minimal base of knowledge.

Before her participation in our project, Irma, like many of our participants, already required written assignments. But she modified her existing assignments and added new ones that would enhance the learning dialogue between teacher and student and that would increase her ability to assess knowledge at crucial points in the course. She was not satisfied with one of her innovations—her attempt to get students to write about their feelings, which, though not altogether a failure, did not meet her expectations. This is a typical experience for many teachers. We assume that students would rather write about themselves than about any other topic. In fact, most college students, even those who have come back to school in later life, are undergoing a process of self-transformation and are reluctant or even unable to reveal themselves in writing. Those who do manage to get their feelings on paper, however, often benefit greatly from the experience, and so do the teachers who read these writings and gain insights into their students that they would never have gained without requiring writing. This was certainly the experience of Davie Johnson, another nursing instructor who reports on her use of writing-as-learning assignments in the next chapter.

Part Three

Writing to Learn

Chapter 8

The Clinical Journal for Nursing Students

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In my years as a nursing teacher, I have often wondered what happens to the writing skills students gain in their introductory English class. By the time they reach my courses in clinical nursing, they seem to have forgotten them, or maybe they never realized that those skills will be called forth in future classroom activities. Many times teachers do not reinforce the need for those skills.

Unlike students in other fields, nursing students have traditionally spent much time writing, especially formal assignments like care plans and reports. They also do a great deal of reading. To help them retain a record of what they read and its source, I encourage them to write brief abstracts on 3 x 5 cards. Information on the cards includes the name of the author, title of the article, name of the book or magazine, publisher, city, and date of publication, pages, and a summary of the article.

After attending a program on writing across the curriculum led by Agnes Robinson of El Paso Community College and Chris Burnham of New Mexico State University, I enrolled in El Paso Community College's Master Teacher Program in Writing across the Curriculum (WAC). My work in WAC encouraged me to try a new approach to writing in the clinical setting. In an attempt to get students to do expressive writing, I requested that they keep a daily journal.

Description of the Course and the Clinical Day

The course is team-taught and divided into two parts, Fundamentals I—Theory and Fundamentals I—Clinic. The students enrolled in the course have completed support courses such as technical math, anatomy and physiology, and introduction to psychology. The theory they learn prepares them to use the nursing process, emphasizing assessment, and includes the development of nursing diagnoses and therapeutic procedures. An introduction to administration of diet and drugs, as they pertain to nursing, is included, with assigned laboratory time to practice skills. Clinic provides students with experience in the application of nursing skills based on concepts from the study of the nursing process, with an emphasis on the nursing home setting.

Course objectives are based on nursing process and the five National League for Nursing Competencies of Graduates of Associate Degree Nursing Programs. Using the nursing process, students employ a systematic method of planning and providing nursing care based on scientific rationale, followed by evaluation of patient goals.

In the role of *professional,* students are enocuraged to assume responsibility for self development, and are accountable for their nursing practice within the professions's ethical framework.

As a *communicator*, students report and record accurately pertinent patient care information, use therapeutic communication techniques, and demonstrate knowledge of hospital/community resources and the referral process.

The *provider* role is based on identified psycho-social needs of the patient. Students apply Erickson's stages of personality development to collect data for care delivery, correlate pathophysiology with signs and symptoms of disease, and use Maslow's hierarchy of human needs to set care priorities.

As *teachers*, students identify the patient's educational needs, develop a teaching plan to meet those needs, and reinforce other nurses' teaching plans.

As *managers*, students identify cost effective techniques for the management of time, resources, and equipment, and they learn to function as members of health care teams.

Students are prepared for their work in the clinic by the morning nursing report. Presentation during this group discussion includes a general description of the patient, a brief health assessment, short -and long-term goals, nursing interventions, and the medical plan of care for treatments, procedures, laboratory studies, diet, and medications. Immediately following the report, students develop a theoretical nursing care plan for their assigned patients and present this plan during the pre-conference.

The purpose of the pre-conference is to clarify for the students the assignment and the learning expectations, to lay the foundation for analysis of the experience, to recognize the scope and limitations of the nurse's role, and to reinforce problem solving, application of theory, and use of judgment.

My role is to lead the group discussion, give additional baseline data, support the student's application of theory to the clinical situation, and discuss overall assignment objectives. I encourage students to defend their choices with a scientific rationale and with good judgment.

The clinical day is filled with activities of personal hygiene, meals, physician rounds, administration of medication, treatments and procedures, communicating, teaching, rehabilitation techniques, management, and planning for the care of patients.

Post-conference concludes the clinical day. Students are assisted with a review and analysis of the clinical experience, and again relations between theory and practice are clarified.

The Assignment of Clinical Journals

The students were to record and share information which they considered important from pre-conferences, clinical day activities, post-conferences, and even their leisure time. Recordings were to include their thoughts, feelings, critiques, challenges to questions, procedures/techniques, opposing views, praise, or humor. For the student, the journal served as a record of information which had been omitted or which needed clarification, clinical accomplishments, feelings in the clinical setting, and an occasional laugh. For me, the journal showed what information or concepts needed to be presented or clarified, and it provided me with information to assist me in keeping accurate records of the students' clinical accomplishments and an opportunity to help them deal with their feelings. For all of us, the journal added some balance and sometimes a touch of humor in a day filled with the stress of life and death matters.

There was no penalty for errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation, nor was there a grade assigned for this activity. I realize this practice will be an issue for some teachers, but it seemed to work for my course. All the students participated freely and enthusiastically.

The next section of this chapter is devoted to a sampling of the clinical journals I received, so that other teachers can see how such an assignment can enhance the clinical experience. The journals the students wrote for this particular course involved their work with elderly residents in a nursing home. This writing had a deep effect on how our department handled this course in the future. I think any teacher who reads it will see how journal writing adds to the growth of the student.

Clinical Journal

January 30, 1985

First day in clinical. Mrs. A. talked with us about the nursing home and its policies. She made us feel very welcome. We were given a tour of the facility and introduced to the floor nurse. Break at 10:45. Spent the remainder of the morning talking about care of the elderly.

Lunch at 12:45. Very enjoyable. Mrs. Johnson sat with us and gave us some background information about herself, training, and teaching. This really helped us to know her better.

1:45 to 3:00 spent talking about feeding the elderly and some problems we might encounter. I'm very anxious to get started.

Met my resident, Mr. T. He seems to be a very nice but very sick man.

February 4, 1985

Arrived with S. and B. at the nursing home at 6:45. Had coffee with students. Mrs. Johnson came in and all students gave report. Mr. M is a "no code" and has terminal cancer. I feel very good about this because there is no point to quantity without quality of life.

Mr. M. sleeping. Helped H and S with bedmaking. Mr. M. awake at 11:30 complaining of pain in his back related to his decubitus ulcer. Floor nurse provided treatment.

Lunch served at 12:00. Resident able to feed himself with a minimal amount of help cutting his sandwich and opening cartons.

Lunch for me at 12:30. Played the piano for everyone. Very enjoyable for me and everyone seemed to like it.

1:30—Reported to the nurse about the kind of day resident had.

2:00—3:00 Post-conference. Discussed how to handle the agitated resident. One of the students was struck by a resident. Also discussed the "fresh" male resident. One of the residents wandered into the room and caused a little uneasiness. Not sure how to handle the unruly or agitated resident.

3:20—Home. A very enjoyable day!

February 6, 1985

My resident has elevated temp. Not a good day at all for him. His wife visited this morning. A lovely lady, but she does not assist her husband in accepting his condition. His roommate died at 10:10 this morning. M. [a student] is very upset. Quite an experience for her. I try to be of some comfort to the family. The daughter expresses guilt feelings. I suppose we all feel this way to some extent at the loss of a loved one.

My resident upset at the turn of events. When I tried to leave for the day, he reached for me and did not want me to leave him. I feel that his death is probably imminent. A very nice resident, although he tested me at times. That is his right.

February 11, 1985

Today when I got to the nursing home, there had been a big change in my resident, Mrs. P. She was unconscious and her pupils were dilated. I provided a bedbath, fresh linens, and oral care. She was repositioned often during the day.

Post-conference—Discussed the nursing care plan and procedures to be checked off. I will get another resident Wednesday, a lady with multiple sclerosis. After talking with her for a short while, my impression is of a very nice lady who suffers lots of pain. I'm looking forward to spending lots of time with her.

February 13, 1985

Had to turn in to our instructor a nursing care plan. My first day with my new resident. This is a lovely lady with lots of pain. Ran back and forth all day between the two residents. My resident up in the chair for a while. Had to feed her—she is a quadriplegic and can do nothing for herself. She is so grateful for everything that is done for her.

A really busy day helping some of the other students with things. We all help each other and get along really well.

I am able to keep this same resident for another week. She seems to be very glad that I will be with her. I think this lady has much to teach us all about suffering and kindness. She amazes me with her quiet acceptance of anything that is in store for her.

Monday, February 25, 1985

This morning in pre-conference, we were asked if there were any problems that we wanted to discuss before the day began. There were none, so we were able to get on the floor early.

I found my resident in tears and having a very bad day. Her temperature was 101.4°F and her cheeks were flushed. She was also having a problem with nausea and vomited the little bit of breakfast that she was able to eat. All of this was related to the staff nurse and medications were given, with very little results.

I was not able to do any other procedures that I had not been checked off on. I am up to date on my skills and there are no others that I need at this time.

Everyone seems to be looking forward to the next rotation, but we surely will miss Mrs. Johnson. She has been so patient with all of us and always willing to help in any way that she can. We all feel that we have learned a lot from her and hope that our next rotation will be as enjoyable as this one has been.

No word yet on the care plans—that comes Wednesday. I have mixed feelings about getting mine back!

In post-conference we talked about how to take an accurate intake and output on a patient. This is a skill that I have already been checked off on. Also, we discussed assignments that are due next Wednesday.

Today was not a good day for my resident, and I hope to find her doing better when I go up to visit her tomorrow night. She is such a sweet woman and it really bothers me to see her suffer so much.

March 20, 1985

I arrive at the facility at 6:30 am. I washed my hands 2 minutes, but I forgot to document it in my report of activities. 6:45 am, we listened to the report of the total census. That means surgical and medical patients at the 3rd floor. When we finished with the report I went to the nurse's station and took the sphygmomanometer and the thermometer and I went to take my patient's vital signs. I made the initial assessment such as neuro checks, neuro-muscular checks, skin, mucous membranes, etc.

My patient came to the hospital complaining of abdominal pain and a cholestectomy was performed on her. Her family was wondering what the doctor had found in my patient's gallbladder, so I decided to call the pathologist [physician's order] via unit secretary to send the calculi to the floor. A container with 9 rounded stones of 0.5 cm. in diameter were sent and I showed them to my patient and 2 family members.

After she ate her breakfast, a soft low fat diet, I started to give her a total sponge bath. I asked my patient if she wanted to give her own perineal care, and she told me, "I can not because I can not reach." In this situation, I went to my instructor in order to get a female schoolmate to stay with me just only for protection of my patient and myself, because since I am a professional, I don't mind to work with male or female patients but I like to protect my patient's integrity.

My patient wanted her hair washed, and I went to the 4th floor to get a shampoo tray, but there was none, so I called to CSR. The person who answered gave me another number and after two more calls I found the place. Trays are kept in a storage room next door to ICU. I took the tray to my floor, and under my instructor's supervision I washed my patient's hair. I sat her up in the chair and while I was talking to her and listening to her, I made her bed. Then, assisted with ambulation and with her cane. I took her back to bed. At this point, I asked my schoolmate to take care of my patient. I gave her a quick report with the most important things to do and went to lunch.

When I cam back from the coffee shop, I started to write my nurse's notes and I showed them to my instructor. My patient was in bed, talking with some visitors. I said thanks to her and went to conference.

March 27, 1985

I had a good day today, during pre-conference I was concerned about my patient's condition and how it was going to affect the things I needed to do for her, but like always, Mrs. Johnson clarifies any questions and doubts. My patient didn't get discharged which made my day full of things to do. It's hard to try and learn anything when your patient gets discharged. Anyway, during post-conference it seems that the main topic is always how procedures are done at this hospital, and how we may need to modify the way we're being taught, which seems a lot more logical when it regards the patient's health. During post-conference we not only get to talk about the things we did but about everything in general, which to me seems to be important because this being our first semester is going to determine if we will be going on or not.

Monday April 1, 1985

Great day! I got to go to the recovery room and be with my patient after her surgery was over. Got to do vitals every 15 minutes and overall keep close observation on her. It's different from what we've been doing on the surgical floor, but you get to see how the patient has learned what you taught them (deep breathing, leg exercise). This sure was a tiring day but a whole new experience.

During post-conference we discussed about how older patients or terminal patients are being sent to nursing homes. For example, my patient who was 79 but oriented and alert. The physician ordered that she be sent to a nursing home where she could be watched 24 hours. What I experienced in the nursing home was depressing and knowing that this lady who seemed so full of energy was being sent there made me angry. It made me want to yell at the physician and tell him he shouldn't send anyone there until he himself had been in one. I also felt like telling her daughter off. But all of this yelling wouldn't have gotten me anywhere.

This lady had been painted a very nice picture about a nursing home and it tore me apart when I started to suggest a different alternative to 24-hour care, and she lighted up and started saying how she had been told how nice of a place it is, she even said her daughter checked it out. It makes me wonder didn't the daughter walk into this place with her eyes open or does she want to not be bothered with having to worry about her own mother. I do understand that these people need to be provided with special handling and care, but if all nursing homes are similar to the one I experienced these people are better off alone, they don't need to have other people treating them like animals in an assembly line

> every time they need a bath or speaking to them with disrespect just because they think these people are disoriented or old or too sick to have feelings. I think I better stop here, this topic is making me angry and brings tears to my eyes.
>
> *April 3, 1985*
>
> I met Mrs. G. as I was passing down the hall one morning. She was not under my care. I stopped and said good morning, and was amazed at how this lady with a fractured hip was so alert reading her newspaper, sitting in a chair wearing makeup beautifully and hair done up in a nice perm.
>
> Later on in the day I heard that plans were being made to place her in a nursing home. I was appalled to hear this. Mrs. G. is an alert person with all of her mental faculties. The only problem is her fractured hip. In my opinion she has no place in a nursing home.
>
> Nursing homes do not foster ideas of wellness or the idea of treating the bio-psycho-social-communicating, cultural person. When I see a person like Mrs. G. being railroaded into a place like this, I see the demise of a fully functioning human being.

Results

Other students used the clinical journal to voice similar feelings. One wrote: "the rotation in the nursing home served as a startling and heartbreaking introduction to an intolerable way of life for the elderly which has been accepted by the majority of the population as a reasonable answer to the problems of caring for the aged. The care provided . . . was not delivered with consideration of the uniqueness and dignity of the individual, but with what was necessary to avoid a lawsuit." This student concluded that "The experience invoked in me a preference for death over that of confinement in a nursing home."

The literature on nursing education is replete with commentary that suggests that the experience of our students is common and predictable. I have long urged my colleagues to modify our approach to this clinical learning experience because it is so traumatizing to students. But the students themselves never expressed their feelings until I had them write the journals.

I shared their journals (with their permission) with my colleagues, with the result that we agreed to try a different approach to the clinic. Students attended an adult care day program for their first clinical experience. To this they responded with more positive than negative comments. A plan is now in progress to add a course segment that deals with the normal aging process.

None of these changes would have occurred without the journal-writing assignment.

Editor's Commentary

Davie Johnson's use of the clinical journal is a dramatic demonstration of how writing enhances the learning environment. Though the nursing program at her college already allowed ample time for the students to express themselves in conferences with the teacher, the opportunity to write about their experiences, which required time for private reflection, brought out new emotions and new understanding. The journals helped the students to articulate and thereby to confront their feelings about a difficult, occasionally traumatic experience; many of them attained an impressive degree of eloquence matched only by their impressive humaneness. We could hardly claim that the journals made them better people, but the writing certainly helped them to "see themselves" in relation to what they were doing rather than to move through the process mechanically with a vague sense of discomfort. In writing about the clinic, they were able to face up to their feelings. In addition, the teachers who read the journals had to face up to the inadequacies of how they were dealing with the clinic. This is a case in which writing across the curriculum has profound effects on the nature of curricular development. It is to the credit of the faculty in the nursing program at El Paso Community College that they allowed themselves to learn from the writing in student journals about the directions their course in clinical practice should take. Writing as learning indeed!

Chapter 9

Writing in Agricultural Marketing

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Before being introduced to writing across the curriculum, I had very little interest in or working knowledge of how to incorporate writing techniques into my courses. I knew through first-hand experience with student work that a great need existed for additional emphasis being placed on their communication skills, particularly writing. Most of my students did not have the skills required for job entry or continued formal education. This deprivation can and has been attributed to various portions of or the whole of our educational system. No matter who or what is to blame, the fact remained that many of my students in were not developing and did not have upon leaving the courses what I felt were sufficient writing skills to communicate effectively.

Some may argue that students in agriculture need few of these skills. However, I contend that the need to communication is increasing daily. Advances in the technology of agriculture make it imperative that our agriculturists, from producer to the Secretary of Agriculture, be able to transfer, to communicate, those advances. What could I, as just one teacher, do to alleviate a portion of this problem?

Making Agricultural Marketing 236 a Writing-Intensive Course

After attending a WAC seminar, I could see how the students would benefit from such a program in instruction/learning. I chose Agricultural Marketing 236 as the course in which I would attempt to incorporate writing-intensive principles. This course is designed to provide the student an understanding, introduction to, and/or examination of our food marketing system and its contributions to the national economy. Some of the specific topics covered in the course are the distribution of farm products, kinds of markets, supply and demand relationships, processing, exchange functions, price systems, market intelligence, cooperatives, and marketing orders.

Before the Spring Semester 1987, this course had been structured primarily as a lecture course, Tuesdays and Thursdays for 1 hour and 15 minutes, in 29 class meetings. This mode of teaching lent itself to minimal inquiry and response by either the students or me. Most of the students taking this course have had agricultural backgrounds and are planning on continuing their education at some four-year institution in an area of agriculture. Academically they run the gamut from top to bottom. This also has been true of their motivation. In any one semester approximately half the class are second semester freshmen and the other half are second semester sophomores. This diversity of students has not concerned me. The only writing required of students in this course was on intermittent daily quizzes and scheduled examinations. Even though I have traditionally used discussion, comparison and contrast, and expository questions on examinations, the students have not spent the time or had the skills to develop what I would consider quality answers.

Assignments

There are various ways to incorporate writing-intensive techniques in a course. Having heard and read about several of these, I determined to modify the course and use writing to accomplish some of what had previously been done in my lectures.

Current topics have been used as a mechanism to include today's activities in a course which relies much on knowledge of the past to predict the future. The students brought in topics from magazines, newspapers, periodicals, trade journals, etc. on a regular basis. These were placed in a binder, students were expected to read all the items, and questions pertaining to some of the topics were made a part of subsequent examinations.

The addition of some student writing on the topics appeared to be an area where the original intent, currency, and some of the concepts in WAC could be combined. During the first class period in the Spring Semester 1987, the students were given a course outline and calendar of events. Dates were noted when topics were to be turned in. In addition the students were to prepare a short analysis, response, or reaction to the subject matter of their topic. Time would be used in class to discuss some of these writings. Eight of these were assigned, and each was worth 25 points (2.3%) of the final course grade.

A new category of graded work, daily writings, was added to the course outline. There were eight of these also and each was worth 25 points (2.3%) of the final course grade. These daily writings replaced the homework and pop quizzes that had been used.

Responses to Articles on Current Topics

The objective of the responses to current topics was to bring into the classroom the most current information being disseminated to the agricultural community. Each student was expected to locate an article pertaining to agricultural marketing, write a critique of it, and to turn it in at the designated time.

Some problems became apparent very quickly. Students often did not submit their articles and critiques on time. They said they "forgot." As a concerned, conscientious, and caring instructor, I should allow them the opportunity to engage in the activity, reap the benefits, and receive the reward (a grade) with enough flexibility to allow for this type of behavior. On the other hand, there are just so many hours in a day and I finally, about mid-term, allowed no one, for whatever reason, to turn in articles late. Suddenly the forgetfulness vanished and the percentage of papers turned in on time increased greatly. It does take some time to read the student critiques and respond back to them. This became much less time consuming as the semester progressed. Their writing of critiques improved or at least changed to resemble more of what I was looking for.

From the first day, the students had somewhat of a negative attitude toward the topics. The short analysis, response, or reaction to the topics became for the most part a restatement of several facts found in the article. After I graded down for two or three items, the students realized that more was expected of them than just a rehash of the facts in the articles. My expectation was for improvement, and it was evident on subsequent responses. I actually had students come to my office and discuss with me the subject matter of their own and others' topics. In semesters to follow the students will be made aware of acceptable performance before the first topic is due. This should alleviate some of the early failure to produce acceptable work. Knowing when the topics were due in advance allowed the students time to plan, research, etc., which should improve their responses also.

Benefits to the students were multifaceted. The currency of information was of use as strictly instructional material and as data for decision making as some of the students were actively involved in production agriculture. The wide range and types of topics reinforced the notion that our agriculture is enormously diverse. Students became more aware of the possible career areas in which they might involve themselves. The complexity of our agricultural marketing system and the processes that make it up were easily discussed as the students brought in materials that verified the very things I had intended to discuss from the textbook. As the instructor I probably received more benefits as I read most of the topics and could then correlate the material into a more meaningful presentation.

Daily Writings

The objective of the daily writings was to give some variety to the work that the students were accomplishing. The following are the assignments used in this portion of the class. The students did not know the topics until the daily writing was assigned or accomplished in class.

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1) During class each student was asked to respond to their choice of three questions. Response should have reflected that they had read the material assigned. Student responses were used in class to allow their input to subject matter being discussed.

2) Each student was asked to defend or refute the L.O.M.A., Law of Market Area, as suggested by F. A. Fetter. Class discussion was directed by the responses given.

3) Each student developed a policy statement for the Secretary of Agriculture to give at a Congressional hearing on Agricultural Exports.

4) Using a chart (visual aid) each student developed a price/time curve for a particular agricultural commodity or food product. These charts were used in class to denote the wide range of variability and fluctuation of prices in the agricultural sector.

5) Each student wrote a response in class to the following statement:

   "Farmers (Agricultural Producers) should resist the integration of other groups into agriculture, and there should be laws passed to prevent it."

   Several of these responses were used to generate discussion.

6) Students were divided into two- and three-person teams. Their task was to develop an advertisement, box cover, or wrapper for a food product, analog, substitute, or synthetic food that is to be found on a shopper's list in the year 2000. After an oral presentation to the class, a vote was taken to rank order the advertising abilities of each team.

7) From the standards in the textbook or other sources, each student developed a set of standards or grades that could be used for all U.S. farm—produced food products. Their system had to be defended by a narrative. Lively discussion resulted from these responses.

8) Each team produced a "How-To" guide for use of the futures market as a viable tool for the American Agricultural Producer (Farmer). These were used as the basis for classroom discussion.

The benefits from these exercises were several. Generally, the students improved in their reading of assigned textbook material, though the responses to the first few assignments were disappointing. Class participation improved as more questions and comments were generated by the students and their responses to instructor questions increased in number and quality.

The team efforts, assignments 6 and 8, were possibly the best exercises. Even though the team members changed between exercises, the cooperative effort was easily detected and a very definite competitive spirit existed, especially during the oral presentations and classroom discussions.

Conclusions

As was anticipated, the WAC principles, techniques, and procedures have increased my awareness of the wide diversity of my students' abilities, skills, and knowledge both as learners and as communicators. Possibly of equal importance has been my own awareness of how I can improve as a teacher. We non-English course instructors must make an effort to gain a firm grasp of spoken and written English, if our students are to gain from a writing-intensive program.

The time spent, much less than I had originally anticipated, with this portion of the course has been most valuable to me and I believe productive for my students. The topics will continue to be a part of the Agricultural Marketing course with some modification. I will give the students much more detailed instructions on the writing assignments. The daily writings will be continued with the three in-class exercises being converted to some type of outside assignment. One of these three will possibly be a team effort.

I believe that any instructor who is concerned about students and their performance as meaningful members of society will consider the principles of writing across the curriculum as an additional tool to be used in the learning environment. The benefits far outweigh the time or effort required to put the principles into practice.

Editor's Commentary

Otto Schacht states more bluntly than any of our participants the down side of lecture classes: they tend to require "minimal inquiry and response" from either the students or the teacher. He decided that several short writing assignments could put the learning load on the students and increase interaction in the class.

An important part of this decision was that he committed to a relatively large number of assignments. This allowed him to use grading to show the students what he expected (promptness, original thought, etc.) without hurting their final grades in a significant way. It gave the students a chance to improve and to show their improvement. It also increased the number of topics that could be covered in class, once again indicating that writing assignments enhance coverage rather than limit it.

Otto found that, as the students improved or as they began to give him what he wanted on the papers, he spent far less time evaluating the work than he anticipated that he would have to spend. This experience is typical for a teacher in early experiments with writing-intensive courses. You may have to make a greater commitment for time to grade papers early in the course, but this time will decrease as your students become more proficient at writing and as you develop your own system of reading and responding.

Chapter 10

A Writing-Intensive Course in Automotive Engine Repair

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As I initially thought of using writing assignments in my courses, I had several unanswered questions: Where do I start? How can I use writing assignments? How do I assess writing? How long should the assignments take to complete? Where can I get help? How do I motivate students to complete the assignments? Will they see the value of the assignments? Will it be a waste of time? More busywork? These an a host of other questions confronted me when I first considered using written assignments in my automotive course.

Finding answers to these questions motivated my participation in the West Texas Writing Across the Curriculum Project. I needed answers to these questions and had no idea where to find them. Maybe I can share some insights into these potential roadblocks with others who are considering the use of writing assignments. If I can accomplish that, then this article will have served its purpose.

This article describes the course I taught, provides examples of the writing assignments I used and suggestions for improving these assignments, and presents methods for gaining help in finding answers to all those unanswered questions..

The course is titled Power Plant Overhaul Theory and is taught at South Plains College—Lubbock in the automotive apprenticeship program. Our students have a variety of educational backgrounds. They range from high school dropouts desiring vocational training, to retired military personnel wanting additional training or retraining, to some who have had some college education. Most of our students have not had a technical writing course, and this lack of formal training in writing poses a problem for many of them.

The broad objectives of the Power Plant Overhaul Theory course were: (1) to give students an understanding of proper procedures for engine diagnosis and repair and (2) to make them aware of techniques used in engine removal, disassembly, inspection, and repair.

Writing-as-Learning Assignments

The writing assignments that I used in this course were of two types. The first type were writing-as-learning assignments. (See Chapter 1 for a definition and rationale for this approach.) I used two assignments of this type: directed notes and summaries of articles.

Directed Notes

Objective. To reinforce concepts the students had studied by having them restate the concepts in their own words.

Conditions. This assignment was originally done outside of class on loose-leaf notebook paper, but I feel a journal of this type of writing would be much less threatening for future assignments of this nature. The questions that served as the basis for the writing of directed notes were given one at a time at appropriate moments in the course. Grouping them together, we can see how they would have made a very good set of journal assignments. In the future, I will present them in this way, so that at the end of the semester, the students will be able to use the journal as a tool for review.

Assignment. The directed notes assignments are based on the following list of questions.

Answer the following questions in your own words, using complete sentences:

1. List and describe 4 engine bearing requirements.
2. Explain piston clearance.
3. List the parts that make up the valve train.
4. Sketch a camshaft lobe and label the parts.
5. Explain what valve lash is and discuss why it is necessary.
6. Explain why valve interference angle is necessary.
7. List some results of excessive engine wear.
8. Discuss the various ways oil can enter the combustion chamber of a worn engine.
9. How can an engine knock be isolated to a specific cylinder?
10. Describe a compression test and explain its purpose.
11. What is a cylinder leakage test and how is it performed?
12. Why is it necessary to mark all bearing caps prior to removal?
13. Why is it necessary to remove the ring ridge in a cylinder prior to piston removal?
14. Describe what could happen if new piston rings do not have enough end gap.

Benefits. These types of questions can be used to evaluate the level of your students' comprehension and to provide a basis for discussion when covering a certain phase of training, before assigning related repairs to students. You can find similar questions in existing textbooks and workbooks or, with a little imagination, can draft some of your own. The students were able discuss the topics better after writing about them.

Potential Problems. One area of caution I will share is the need to be willing to accept your students' work no matter what their level of proficiency in communication at that time. I found that my expectations were considerably higher than the level at which most students were capable of writing. Many of the students had poor skills in spelling and sentence structure, and the writing reflected a host of language-related problems. In order for the writing to be a valuable learning tool, it is important to take the cutting edge off our expectations on less formal types of writing. Writing is a valuable learning tool if properly handled, and I strongly recommend using it even in the more technical curricula such as the automotive apprenticeship program.

Summaries of Articles

A second type of writing-as-learning assignment I tried was to have the students write summaries of recent periodical articles. I find this to be one of the best sources of up-to-date information relating to any technical field. The summaries make an excellent source of knowledge that can be shared with others through classroom discussion and individual student oral reports (with directed question and answer time). This assignment forces each student into a more active role in the classroom. Again, it is important to state your expectations clearly when the assignment is made.

World-of-Work Assignments

The second general type of writing I assigned was writing that reflects what my students will be expected to do as professionals in the "world of work." Two samples of such assignments follow.

Describing a Procedure

Objective. To determine if the students have mastered the concept of performing an oil pressure test and to cause them to use their higher-level reasoning skills to determine what other repairs might be necessary in the event the test showed less than adequate results (based on manufactures' specifications).

Conditions. When I gave this assignment, I told the students they could work in pairs if they desired, but most chose to do it individually. I found that those who were fairly knowledgeable were unwilling to "share" a grade with someone less knowledgeable than themselves. The only other conditions were that they use complete sentences, write legibly, and be neat.

Assignment. A typical description of a procedure assignments reads like this:

> List the steps required in performing an oil pressure test. Discuss how the information obtained from the test can be used to determine what additional repairs, if any, are necessary. Give all pertinent data which is necessary to make a successful evaluation of the test, i.e., engine temperature, oil level, engine rpm, etc.

Benefits. This written analysis of the repair procedure enhances learning by requiring the students to *write* about their understanding of actual test procedures and relate further diagnosis and repair to actual test data. This is a type of test they will perform in an actual repair situation on the job, and this type of writing will force them to justify their repairs based on real test conditions. In a real-life situation, they may have to provide such an justification to a customer or supervisor, either orally or in writing. Warranty claims, for example, often require such descriptions. The mechanic may also find it necessary to "sell" the customer on the need for additional repairs.

Potential Problems. If students are unfamiliar with the actual procedure, they will be more apt to try to copy the procedure from a manual or textbook. It is very important to stress the need to avoid such plagiarism, so that the students will have to think about what they are writing.

Reporting on a Visit to a Local Machine Shop

Objective. The students were to relate experiences gained from a field trip to indicate how much they retained from the experience. This assignment was designed to give them practice in relating technical information to readers who might have a need to know but lack a technical background.

Conditions. I had the students prepare a typewritten paper detailing the visit. Only the final draft was taken up for grade assessment, and the results were surprisingly good. I did, however, encounter quite a bit of resistance to this assignment and felt that maybe I expected too much. In the future I intend to use a similar experience to aid in training, but plan to change the assignment to a much less formal structure. One thing I learned from this experience is how little time our students have to prepare an assignment of this nature. I found it to be especially important that all my expectations were clearly spelled out at the beginning so any concerns could be easily explained. This was true of all types of assignments, including the writing-as-learning assignments mentioned earlier.

Assignment. One of the typical trip report assignments I used last semester is as follows:

> Write a report on a visit to a local machine shop. The report should be directed to someone in an agency interested in knowing the nature of the business, i.e., Chamber of Commerce, Board of City Development, or a similar organization. Be concise in stating what you learned during your visit to the facility and discuss the types of equipment demonstrated and the purpose of each machine. State your purpose for visiting the machine shop and what you personally achieved from the visit. Discuss the value of the tour, your own personal reaction to the type of learning that took place and tell whether you felt the tour was of benefit in achieving the objectives of this course. Also discuss whether you felt the demonstrations were understandable and how this experience can be of benefit to you in your career as an automotive repair technician.

Benefits. I feel that the experience gained from a field trip enhanced the learning that takes place within the parameters of the objectives of any course. Furthermore, to relate that experience to someone else by writing about the experience will further enhance that learning and will serve as a means for improving communication skills.

Potential Problems. After having given the assignments, I later realized that my expectations were too high for the assignments to be of greatest value to the students. Most of our students work full time and therefore have little time outside of class and work to commit to a lengthy report. It is better to take that into account before the assignments are made and thereby obtain better results as a consequence. It is imperative that we communicate our expectations very clearly in writing so that there is little doubt as to what we want the students to accomplish. Even with clearly stated assignments I have found that there are still some who do not fully understand what is expected. This problem could be enough of a stumbling block to cause us to drop the writing assignments altogether. However, I prefer to learn from my mistakes and plan to modify the assignments in the future by having the students do an informal critique of the experience in their journals rather than a formal report.

Sources for the Teacher of Writing-Intensive Courses

Earlier I mentioned that I would share methods for gaining help in finding answers to all those unanswered questions. After some frustration in acquiring those answers, I found that there are sources for help all around if we just make our needs known. Having participated in a writing-across-the- curriculum workshop with other instructors, I realized that English departments have many resources for helping answer many of those questions. The English professors I had the pleasure of meeting gave me much advice to help guide me to more successful types of writing assignments.

Other instructors have been quite willing to share their ideas for different types of assignments, and I have found that a chat in the hall on the way to class has given me innovative ideas that I would not have had otherwise. Handouts can also be acquired from other instructors who may have used them in similar courses.

Conclusion

Having used writing in several courses, I am convinced that it does indeed enhance learning. The key element to keep in mind when using writing as a form of learning is to be very clear in communicating your expectations to the students before making the assignment. Even after that is done, you will need to be available to clarify areas of uncertainty and to give advice about improving their writing. My students have said that they felt that their learning was enhanced as a result of having used writing in conjunction with other forms of learning. That is really the bottom line in using writing assignments in the first place and is all that is required in justifying the use of writing. So to that end I urge all vocational-technical teachers to consider using writing as a means of enhancing students' learning.

Editor's Commentary

Neal Barnes does us a great service by reporting on his difficulty in finding suitable world-of-work assignments for his courses in automotive technology. The fact is, in many of the fields for which we train students in technical education, workers do not produce very much formal writing. The writing of automotive technicians will often be limited to filling out repair forms—but the importance of this should not be overlooked: a customer is likely to be greatly disturbed by a poorly described procedure, especially an expensive procedure. One automotive technology instructor we talked with approaches this problem by reproducing forms which resemble those used in a local shop and requiring his students to complete these forms for all the work they do in the course workshop.

Neal's great insight was simply to reduce the formality of his assignments and stick more closely to the writing-as-learning model. As he moved toward the academic model, he encountered more and more resistance from his automotive students, most of whom had rejected academic education for a more practical vocational-technical program. The great flexibility of the WaL model accounts for its popularity in writing across the curriculum. When one instructor of emergency medical technology complained after one of our seminars that his purpose was to teach students how to save lives, not how to write papers, we knew he had missed one of our main points: let your students write to learn; they can learn to write in their English classes. But, as Neal Barnes came to realize, you may have to remove the formal obstacles to learning.

Chapter 11

Using Journals to Enhance Learning in Unarmed Defensive Tactics

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Law enforcement students at South Plains College receive instruction in defensive tactics as part of their overall course of study. Classes are designed to train students in various hands-on psychomotor skills such as handcuffing, searching, and unarmed defense. Students experience control techniques, restraints, and holds so they can survive a violent confrontation using only the minimum force necessary as required by law. Students enrolled in the courses come from a wide range of writing experiences and education. For the most part, these students are college level entry students with general high school writing skills. While some are very talented students, many lack the descriptive writing skills necessary to perform work as law enforcement officers.

The objectives of a defensive tactics course are to involve students in various prisoner control techniques, restraints, and come-along holds to make an arrest in such a way that neither the arrested person nor the officer is subjected to undue harm. During the application phase of the instruction process, students become involved in a variety of teaching methods—such as question and answer, discussion, practice, and drill. However, I did not consider writing to be a feasible teaching method in a laboratory environment until I became involved in the West Texas Project in Writing across the Curriculum.

I have used writing-intensive methods of instruction in academic courses for many years. Having students to relate their knowledge of a subject through essays, reports, and projects is a sensible way to evaluate understanding and knowledge. However, the idea of asking students to inscribe their understanding of physical actions and skills somehow escaped my attention. Obviously, demonstration and drill coupled with practice is the way in which a student is going to learn to control a violent suspect and put the "bad guy" in a position to be handcuffed. So, what could the value of *writing* have to offer as an enhancement to student performance? This is but one of the questions that raced through my mind as I was introduced to the concept of using written journals in skills courses. I also wondered how I might incorporate such techniques without changing my concept of what should be done and how to best achieve the desired results in my defensive tactics courses. Was I going to change my course syllabi again just to please some academicians with ideas of how to teach a skill course? How was I going to get by placating the Dean's desire to implement writing-intensive ideas without sacrificing my course content? As you will see, each of these questions was resolved in a positive manner.

Assignments

In planning to apply the new writing techniques to my defensive tactics course, I needed to determine if the cognitive process of descriptive writing would assist the student to understand and, therefore, execute defensive measures more effectively and efficiently. The specific approach would require students to write about each laboratory activity in a lab journal that would, in effect, later serve as an instructional guide. The plan called for the students to use descriptive journal entries to list or explain the process and procedure of the various unarmed defensive techniques. I believed that by reviewing the students' journals, I could determine their understanding of the tactics and plan for remedial and review exercises.

Conditions

On the first day of class, I always explain the grading method by which students are evaluated. In previous defensive tactics courses, I relied on the student's class participation and performance on a practical final examination to arrive at a student's grade. Now, however, I had a new "tool" for evaluation—the student's lab journals. I informed the students that their initial descriptive journal entries would not be graded on spelling or grammar and would not be evaluated according to other traditional grading methods. I explained that I was more concerned with content and their understanding of the process and procedures; the students were encouraged to freewrite and do the best they could without fear of the red pen. However, I did not tell the students that this was a new way of conducting the course. Instead I permitted them to believe that the course had always been taught in this manner and that I expected positive results from their participation. To my surprise, the students showed no resistance to the idea of writing lab journals, nor did they express any concerns of inadequacy or inability to complete the tasks set before them.

I told students that after reviewing their journals, I would interview each person about the writing. Subsequently, each student would be encouraged to completely revise his or her journal to serve as an instructional manual. In doing so, the students would be directed to rewrite their initial lab journal entries so that they became organized and structured—in effect, became a set of instructions that the students would be able to review long after the course was over. The hypothesis of the plan was that writing-intensive techniques would increase the students' understanding of the tactics by writing about them and that I would be able to evaluate the students' understanding by reviewing their journal entries.

Potential Problems with Administering Assignments

At about this stage in the experiment, I began to wonder just how much *time* all of this was going to take—after all, I do teach a full load (and frequently an overload) and I am already *busy*. Could I squeeze out the time necessary to review the journals and conduct the added interviews? The answer finally came to me: as teachers, we find the time to do the things which most benefit the students. Therefore, undaunted, I set out to test the validity of what I expected to greatly assist and enhance the student's comprehension and mastery of course content.

Implementing the Assignment

Students were given the assignment orally. They were directed to observe a tactic and soon thereafter to write a descriptive account of the experience. The journals could include a free-flowing narrative, listing of steps, and even drawings to indicate understanding of the lab tactic. The first journal assignment was completed in the classroom as a class project. One of the first lessons in unarmed defense deals with the concept of "balance." Balance consists of two different areas: mental balance and physical balance. Mental balance is being prepared through training and practice to control the emotional and physical self and then being prepared to control the subject and, ultimately, the situation. Physical balance begins with the "interrogation position" which was developed to allow peace officers to establish a position of balance while protecting their sidearms and parts of the body that are vulnerable to physical attack.

In the classroom, I demonstrated the interrogation position for the students. The position is assumed by approaching a suspect at a 45-degree angle with the officer's sidearm away from the suspect. A right-handed officer should approach the suspect's right side, and a left-handed officer approaches the suspect's left side. In a position just outside of the suspect's reach, the officer assumes a stance with the front foot pointed toward the suspect and the rear foot perpendicular to the front foot; the open stance distributes the officer's weight equally between the legs, providing good balance. By bending the knees slightly, the officer can prevent being pushed or pulled off balance if the suspect initiates an attack.

In the classroom, the students paired off and took turns assuming the interrogation position. The "suspect student" was instructed to attempt to push or pull the "officer student" off balance; the "officer student" was instructed to maintain balance and resist the attack. After each student felt confident in establishing the interrogation position, he or she was directed to sit down and write a description of the technique. The following samples of writings were turned in at the end of the lesson:

> *Stand at a 45 degree angle from the suspect. Put your left foot even with your body with your other foot slightly turned and a little behind you, and your gun on opposite side of him. This keeps you balanced with your gun safely at a distance.*
>
> *The first encounter that a police officer has to face is the interrogation position in which a police officer has to stand an arm's length away from the subject and standing at a 45 degree angle from the person. In the interrogation position, the police officer has to be very careful that his revolver is not facing the side of the perpetrator. The feet of the police officer have to be perpendicular to each other.*

Some of the descriptive writings were very good, while others were poor. Some students demonstrated the tactics well in class, but had great difficulty in describing the procedures on paper. However, some of the students who had the most difficulty in writing the journals were some of the first to sit down and begin writing after the lesson and demonstration without being told to do so. I praised one of these students for his dedication to write his journal entry soon after a lab; he told me that he wanted to write it down before he forgot how to do the technique. The writing was very poor. However, the same student did extremely well in practical application of skills in the class. I suspect that this student's physical skills were a product of his athletic ability *and* his effort to understand the dynamics of the procedures by attempting to write about them.

Following the first journal entry, I interviewed each student informally about the writing assignment in a positive way. I pointed out the student's positive points first—to solicit their interest—and suggested ways in which the journal entry could be improved. In addition, the students were placed in groups and permitted to read each other's entries without knowing the writer's identity. Peer group feedback seemed to have as much, or more, effect on the student's attitude toward the writing assignment than did my private interviews with the students. Subsequently, most of the students regarded the journals as an important part of the lab experience.

With the interrogation position completed, the class began experiencing other defensive techniques: front arm-bars, rear arm-bars, front wrist come-alongs, front wrist take-downs, front/rear choke-breaks and takedowns, and defenses against weapon attacks—to mention a few. To begin descriptive entires in their journals for these tactics, students were permitted to indicate that they assumed the interrogation position without again describing the tactic; once the position was described in one journal entry, the student would not again have to go through this part to describe the new technique. Instead, the student would concentrate more on the elements unique to the new movement. In the following example, the student described the interrogation position and the sleeve-guide come-along before starting this tactic. The student used these tactics as a "jump-off" point to describe the arm-bar technique.

> *Assume the interrogation position. From the sleeve-guide come-along take your right thumb down grabbing the suspect's right hand on the knuckles, thumb inside the suspect's hand between his thumb and finger. Then twist his hand around palm up bring his elbow around to face up while you move your right hand to cup his elbow and press down. At the same time press up with your right hand forcing his fingers toward his head and thus completing the hold.*

In one phase of the instruction, I demonstrated a technique of turning the right hand over in order that the officer's thumb and index fingers point toward the ground to execute proper placement of the officer's hands on the suspect's hands. In the demonstration, I told the students to think of the right hand as a diving airplane to create a picturesque way of remembering the hand movement. To my surprise, the students used the airplane analogy in their journals. One student wrote:

> *In arm bar #2 we also assumed the interrogation position with the addition of the sleeve-guide come-along and the arm bar #1. In this tactic the police officer* pretends his hand is an airplane *and places it in the suspect's hand. The police officer turns the suspect's right hand by rotating the officer's hand and putting pressure in the suspect's nuckles.*

Journal entries were required for each tactic demonstrated in the lab. The process of teacher-student feedback and interviews continued throughout the semester. However, time and demand of attention in other courses were problems in maintaining the intensity of feedback initially created in the first lesson. The peer-group sessions continued, however, throughout the course and tended to be a valuable aid to the amount of time that I had to expend toward the total experiment.

Evaluation

At the beginning of the course, students were informed that they would be required to revise their initial, journal entries for evaluation. Although I did not grade each lab journal individually (other than to note that they were submitted on a timely basis), I did grade the final draft of the lab notebook of the defensive tactics course. In the final evaluation of the notebooks, I considered organization, content, student understanding of process, and grammar or correctness.

Benefits

I have to admit that I am quite pleased with the results when evaluating the effectiveness of the writing-intensive techniques that I used in the defensive tactics course. The student response was positive, and many said they enjoyed the class. The students appeared to retain the mechanics of the tactics better than former students on a week-to-week basis. In fact, I estimate that writing-intensive students were two weeks ahead of students in previous classes.

However, the question of whether these students will maintain the knowledge better on a long-range basis is not yet clear. The hypothesis that the lab journals can serve as a set of instructions that the student will be able to review long after the course and still be able to comprehend has not been tested.

Other factors complicate whether these students will be able to retain efficiency in defensive tactics beyond the final examination. Since defensive tactics are psychomotor skills, the opportunity to practice with another person is extremely important. Since most persons do not have a "willing partner" out of class, I anticipate that most of the students will be "rusty" upon their return to class in the fall. However, I intend to begin teaching the sophomore class using the lab notebooks that they completed in the spring semester. Students will be required to organize small group sessions and discuss the defensive tactics skills. Although the students believed that they were through with writing their instructional notebooks in the spring, they will be required to note weak areas, misunderstandings, and, subsequently, rewrite the notebook again. I believe that this will serve two purposes:

1. The students will have to re-think the process and procedures which enhance the learning method.

2. The students will eventually complete a notebook that they can realistically use as a life-time guide.

Conclusion

I am sold on the concept of using writing-intensive methods to enhance student learning. I believe that informal descriptive writing is just as important in the learning process as formal writing. Before I began experimenting with lab journals in defensive tactics lab, I was uncertain as to what results might occur. To my delight, I found that most of my fears about implementing writing-intensive techniques were unfounded. First of all, I discovered that writing in skill courses eliminated a great deal of repetitive teaching—I did not have to "re-invent the wheel" every week to begin a new lab session. In addition, the use of writing-intensive techniques did not change my concept of what should be done. However, it did change my mind on how best to achieve positive results. To date, I have not had to create massive changes in my course syllabus to achieve stated objectives nor have I sacrificed any course content.

What did occur was quite unexpected. The students who used the writing techniques during the experimental period accelerated their ability to perform required tasks by approximately two weeks as compared to the previous year's students who received only laboratory demonstration, physical application, and practice.

For the criminal justice instructor who teaches defensive tactics in a classroom situation, I believe that writing-intensive techniques provide a new and dynamic tool to enhance the student's ability to retain classroom instruction. This approachenables the instructor to track student learning and put the responsibility to learn on the student, while releasing the instructor to progress to new material.

Editor's Commentary

Before joining the West Texas Project in Writing across the Curriculum, Larry Nichols was already convinced of the value of having students do world-of-work assignments; a professional writer himself (the author of widely used training manuals for law enforcement officers) and the teacher of courses in police report writing, he was well aware of the need for communication in the field for which he was training students. What was new to him in the Project was the concept of writing as learning. As he put it in a response to a recent survey: "Student understanding and retention are greatly enhanced by the use of writing skills."

Of general interest is Larry's application of the purest writing-as-learning assignment—the journal—to a course devoted totally to the development of physical skills. By using writing to reinforce the activities of his defensive tactics class, Larry helped his students to "see" what they were doing in a way that increased their ability to remember what they had done in a given tactic. (Notice how in English we use the word "see" to mean "understand," indicating an implicit connection between the visual sense and language, the symbolic means to understanding.) By describing their actions, the students in effect performed them again in their imaginations. By putting the descriptions into their own words, they claimed the actions as their own. By revising and reviewing the descriptions, they mentally walked through the tactics still another time. (The word "revise," which has the same root as the word "vision," basically means "to see again.")

No wonder that, as Larry observed, the students in the writing-intensive version of the course were two to three weeks ahead of the students in the previous semester's course in which no writing was used. In the writing-intensive version of the course, Larry had to use class time far less frequently to review the tactics. This finding meets head-on the challenge of those who question the efficiency of using writing in vocational-technical classes, those who worry that they will not be able to cover as much material if they spend time making writing assignments. In fact, writing assignments may enable them to cover *more*.

Few people would be surprised to find that journal-writing is useful in a course in history or sociology, but Larry's successful experiment with writing-as-learning in a course devoted to defensive tactics is profoundly suggestive for vocational-technical instruction.

Chapter 12

Enhancing a Course in Office Procedures: Writing Assignments

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My participation in the West Texas Project in Writing across the Curriculum encouraged me to create a writing-intensive course in basic office procedures, taught at South Plains College, Levelland. Many topics are introduced in this class: professionalism, machine transcription, word processing, filing, mail procedures, telephone usage, and a general overview of office work and job opportunities. This course is required as a second-semester freshman course in all secretarial programs. The only prerequisite is intermediate typing.

Basic office procedures meets twice weekly for one hour and fifteen minutes each time and has two 50-minute lab periods. These labs are not assigned at a specific time and place for several reasons: (1) limitations on the number of machines, (2) room availability, and (3) course objectives—learning to set priorities and meet deadlines, and developing initiative and independence.

Because the lab does not have enough machines for a whole class, we divide each class into two rotation groups; while one group is studying one topic, the other group studies something else. Most rotations are organized on a three-week basis. Assignment sheets are handed out at the beginning of each rotation. These are usually completed during class. But all students are also given an outside lab assignment sheet with deadlines for completion. Some class time and all lab time is flexible and may be used as the students desire.

This concept forces the students to manage their time wisely and thus allows them to realize the value of setting priorities and of productivity. Most students have had no experience with an unstructured class situation. Because writing can promote thinking and organizational skills, written assignments can help students adjust to this type of environment and give the instructor an assessment tool to evaluate their progress.

The rotation system used in this class helps prepare the students to become better employes and/or supervisors because of a trainer/trainee concept which develops. Students work independently most of the time and at their own pace. Some students naturally adapt more quickly to new equipment and situations. They thus build self-confidence in their own ability and take pride in teaching the others. The student trainers sharpen their own technical skills while learning human relations skills in a way that cannot be taught by a teacher or textbook. Since I know this trainer concept works, I decided to have all students experience this type of situation. The following assignment has been developed for that purpose.

Writing to Peers (Bonus)

Describe the procedure for setting up tables automatically on the word processor. Include the similarities and the differences in set-up on a regular typewriter.

NOTE: Pretend that you are explaining the process to a friend or classmate.

The primary purpose of this assignment is to see if the students have completed their outside labs, which involve going to the library and viewing a videotape and then practicing automatic table formatting. They must have learned the process well enough to explain it to somebody else. I wanted to see if the trainer concept worked in written form.

Most of the students explained in their own words what needed to be done, and most of them analyzed the similarities and differences well. A few students, of course, seemed to have copied the steps from the reference manual, but even so, I felt they learned something in the process. I just checked off the assignments as bonus work and praised the students for having done a good job. This assignment was so effective that I plan to require it of all students next year.

Writing to a Substitute Worker

Assume that you will be on vacation next week. Arrangements have been made with Kelly Girls, Inc. (temporary help service) to send a substitute secretary. One of your main duties is to process the incoming mail. Write instructions for your substitute, outlining how to handle enclosures, special delivery letters, etc.

This purpose of this assignment is to have the students summarize key ideas from a reading assignment. The better papers had a conversational tone, but many students just tried to copy something straight from the textbook. Another problem was that some students had trouble locating the information they needed because it was spread over several pages in the textbook.

Because of the difficulties, I just checked off this assignment as completed. Next semester, I plan to have the students do this exercise in class with books closed and then exchange papers within small groups. A brief discussion period should reveal any omitted or unclear instructions. Finally, I will encourage checking the book for further details and advise the students that test questions will be asked over this material. I will still keep the assignment as an ungraded one, used only as preparation for class discussion and testing.

Checking Understanding

Lab 1— Go to the library and view the videotape about typing tables on the word processor. Read through this entire assignment before going so that you can complete the three parts of the assignment more easily. After viewing the tape, complete the items below and turn in your answers at the end of the lab.

1. Explain the phrase "Picture the table."
2. Compare *regular tabs* and *decimal tabs*.

3. Compare features 7 (word underline) and features 8 (regular underline). Several differences should be noted.

Hint: Type the following sentence on a word processor—using MEMORY ONLY:

> Now is the time for all good men to come to the
> aid of their country.

Now, go to the beginning of memory and watch the video display as you do the following: Go forward in memory to the end of the word "all," press the features key and the number 7 (both keys at the same time)—watch to see what happens. Continue scanning (moving forward in memory) until you are at the beginning of the word "men," press the features key and the number 8 simultaneously. Keep scanning until the word "country"; press feature 8 again. Now write the comparison of these two features.

I gave this assignment for two reasons: (1) I wanted to verify that students had completed this lab by the assigned deadline, and (2) I wanted to evaluate their understanding of basic concepts before they attempted any production work using these features.

Below are several examples of what I considered good answers for Part 1:

> *"Picture the table" means that you have to decide how the table would generally look in your mind and how to set reasonable margins that are evenly spaced apart. For example, a two column table would require narrower margins than a three column table.*
>
> *"Picture the table" means thinking about how the table will look on the paper. It involves determining what the margins will be, the spacing of the table, and what kinds of tabs it will need.*

Here are some of the vague answers turned in by students:

> *"Picture the table" means to produce a mental picture in your mind of how the table should look.*
>
> *Imagine what the finished product will look like.*
>
> *Means to picture the table in your mind the way you would like it to look it to look before you type it out.*

Here are two students' answers to Part 2 which I considered good:

> *Compare regular tabs to decimal tabs. With regular tabs, the machine will go to the tab and when you start typing it will move to the right. Regular tabs are usually used when typing words. Decimal tabs are used mostly when typing numbers. The machine moves to the decimal position and then works backwards as you type the entry. When you type the period, the machine prints the number on paper and the numbers are lined up the way they should be.*
>
> *Regular tabs are those that set the column to align at the front of the column. Decimal tabs are those that set the columns to align at the back of the column.*

These are some of the less satisfactory responses to Part 2:

> *Regular tabs line up at the left margin and decimal tabs line up at the right margin.*
>
> *Regular tab—lines up on the left margin.*
> *Decimal tab—justifies the right margin.*

Part 3 (comparing word underline and regular underline) had either been extremely easy or extremely confusing the students. Several had difficulty following the instructions because they had typed on paper instead of in memory only. I had forgotten to type that step, and they forgot that I always encourage this method of using the word processor. As a result, I revised that part of the assignment. The more conversational/suggestive type instructions should facilitate completing the assignment. At any rate, by explaining to the students why they had experienced difficulty, it cleared the air. By analyzing my "mistake" in class, I was able to help the students feel less apprehension about their mistakes. In that sense, the assignment had fulfilled its purpose.

I gave this assignment early in the semester, so maybe it was natural to receive some unsatisfactory responses. Therefore, I read sample answers to the class so that they could hear the difference between vague and specific answers. As it turned out, I considered the assignment a learning experience for me as well as the students.

Analyzing Mail Procedures

After reading Chapter 10, "Processing Office Mail," complete the following assignment:

Part 1—Outline ways to cut costs of outgoing mail.

Part 2—Outline methods of speeding up mail handling in an office.

I assigned this material as preparation for the test, which was given at the end of a three-week rotation period. This rotation had included Chapter 7 (Typing Techniques—Productivity) and Chapter 10 (Mail Procedures) as well as several assignments on the word processor. Prior to distributing this writing assignment, we had a class discussion about how the following procedures from Chapter 7 could be applied to Chapter 10: chain feeding of envelopes on regular typewriters and entering mailing lists into a computer or word processor for quick production of mailing labels. The test contained some true/false questions concerning these concepts of cost reduction and of quick processing procedures. Another portion of the test (short answer) asked for five suggestions concerning each of these topics.

On this assignment, some students gave as few as five suggestions for each part assigned, while other students listed as many as 12 suggestions for each part. Of course, sometimes the answers were condensed or combined. Students who developed the assignment well included material from Chapter 7 and from the outside lab assignments being studied during that three-week rotation. These students naturally had an easier time recalling *five* specific ideas for the test, but all students did well on the test questions. Other course objectives are that the students learn to assimilate information, develop initiative and "to do more than required." For these reasons, I gave "A's" to those who integrated the chapters/labs, and I gave "B's" and "C's" to those who listed only major ideas from Chapter 10. I did not have to give anything lower than a "C."

Analyzing Problem Printouts

Go to the library and view the video tape entitled "Typing Reports on the Word Processor." Then complete the following assignment: Study Sample #1 and Sample #2 below. Write an explanation of the major problems occurring in each sample. These errors were discussed during the video tape, but you may need to actually type the exercises to fully understand the problems. Experiment and see if your solution works. Please explain completely (each sample separately).

Bonus—at the bottom of your assignment, draw the video symbols for auto indent and end indent. Also, as bonus, discuss the steps necessary to divide the word in enumeration #1.

SAMPLE #1

1. They felt that the home was the place where the heart lay and not where the house was located.

2. They believed that a wife and a fire were the essentials of a home.

3. The English did not believe in divorce.

SAMPLE #2

1. They felt that the home was the place where the heart lay and not where the house was located

2. They believed that a wife and a fire were the two essentials of a home.

3. The English did not believe in divorce.

I reminded the students to examine the writing assignment before viewing the video tape. In fact, I suggested that they take the problem with them to the viewing so that they could take notes. Even though the video explained the identical problems, some students did not clearly explain the problems and solutions so that another student could have corrected such printout problems. It seemed, however, that the students did understand, just that they did not express themselves completely. At any rate, the students who attempted to produce reports without having completed the above assignment experienced much more difficulty than the students who had. For that reason, I will, in the future, require and grade this assignment instead of handling it as a write-to-learn, ungraded one.

Exploring Job Opportunities (Bonus)

CIA RECRUITMENT PROGRAM
Thursday, February 19, 1987
Student Assistance Center
1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

A CIA recruitment officer will be on campus next week. His purpose will be to recruit secretaries to Washington, D.C. The recruiter will provide information regarding the positions available and administer aptitude tests. The CIA presentation will be a "bonus" option, worth up to 20 points on any test except the final exam. If you want credit, you will need to take a few notes and write a short paragraph about the presentation. What did you learn? Was it interesting? Do you think you can benefit personally from the information presented?

Approximately one fourth of the students (10) attended and many took the aptitude tests; several even followed up the presentation and requested the 15-page application form. The students considered it interesting to learn about the salaries, positions available, and the procedures in checking out a person's "security level." All but two students passed all three of the aptitude tests; more importantly, several received special recognition for outstanding performance in various areas. Even I was impressed with two students' math abilities. One student was extremely quick, made no errors, and did it all in her head! This same student usually did just enough to get by, so it encouraged me to prompt her for better work than she had previously submitted. The other student was extremely shy and had always just blended in. Therefore, I was very pleased to see her receive special recognition—so was she! All the students, however, were made aware of their shortcomings in vocabulary.

Almost as important was the fact that I took the tests also and the students' first question after each test was: "How did you do, Mrs. Leiker?" They, in fact, had the opportunity to examine the graded tests to verify and compare each other's scores. The students' written reports verify that they had been attentive and had profited by the presentation. I felt the bonus points the students earned were well worth it, especially since they had voluntarily spent several hours of their own time.

Strengthening Class Topics

Office Procedures
Lab Assignment
Due____________________

We have been studying the business world of today. Read an article concerning one of the following topics:

1. Equipment used in the office today
2. Skills required in the office today
3. Electronic mail
4. CRT syndrome
5. Salary projections for office jobs
6. Interviewing
7. Automatic transfer of funds
8. Office automation (electronic office)
9. Any topic of interest related to office work

Articles on these subjects may be found in the following publications: (1) *The Secretary*, (2) *Modern Office Procedures*, (3) *The Office*, (4) *Business Week*, (5) *Administrative Management*, (6) *Today's Secretary*, and (7) *Memo to Mailers*. All but the last publication can be obtained from your instructor. Report the article in the following way:

1. Include the title and source of the article as a heading for your report.
2. Write a short summary of the article.
3. Write a short paragraph about what you learned from the article.
4. Prepare a title page for your report. Include the title of the article, your name, the class name and section, and date submitted.

Special note: If you would like to do an extra report for extra credit, select a different topic and follow the above format for the report. Identify it as a bonus report.

The above assignment was given quite early in the semester, based upon the course objective of acquainting students with an overview of the office (machines, environment, duties, etc.). Many students had never bothered to read anything except their textbooks about the secretarial field and trends in the office. Also, many had never been to the library.

The report was graded for content, grammatical correctness, and format. I was pleased with the assignment. Comments by the students indicated that they, too, felt the assignment interesting and valuable. Many took advantage of doing an extra, bonus report, I think just because they had became involved and read additional articles anyway. The best part of the assignment was part three, where I had asked each student to conclude with a personal evaluation of the article.

I gave the students two weeks to do this assignment. Several days before it was due, the classes had a test. At the end of the test, I had added a comment something like this: "If you have completed the library assignment, tell me about it. Approximately how long did it take you? Did you learn anything unusual? Did you enjoy doing the assignment?" Some students, of course, indicated that they had not done the assignment. Since this was not part of the test, it served two purposes: (1) It served as a reminder that the assignment was almost due, and (2) it provided me with valuable feedback. I did not dock their grades in any way, but I gave a few bonus points to the students who had completed the assignment. I based these bonus points on these course objectives: developing a sense of responsibility and initiative, follow-through of instructions, and meeting deadlines.

I Respect Your Opinion

Assume that your boss has asked you for a recommendation concerning the purchase of a new typewriter. You have narrowed your choices to the Silver Reed electronic typewriter ($600) and the Xerox memorywriter ($1200). Your preference is the Xerox memorywriter. Write a memo to your boss stating your reasons for this choice. Give a specific, detailed explanation of how the additional cost will be offset by higher productivity.

This assignment was the last writing assignment given during the semester. I based the assignment on development of pride in one's own abilities and work performance. I wanted the students to fully appreciate the word processor, and I wanted to provide a practical, on-the-job experience. These two machines are the types in our classroom; therefore, I assumed that the students should be able to make a valid comparison of them.

The effectiveness of this assignment can be attributed to two things: First, I discussed it with the students in advance. I took the opportunity to emphasize that their employers were very likely to ask their opinions because of their recent education. I stressed that this situation should be considered a privilege, which they should take seriously and for which they should thank their bosses. I explained that sales representatives were usually willing to leave machinery in offices for a short trial period and that this time could be well spent in examining the machine and accompanying manuals. I suggested that they could ask about local repair facilities and names of local businesses which and this particular type of equipment. Contacting these businesses could prove very valuable—as verification of what the salesperson had said and for their reactions to the machinery. We discussed in-house training and/or 800 HELP numbers. I suggested that the students could base their comments on actual work situations (if possible) or on hypothetical situations, based on their typing classes, etc. For example, the legal secretarial majors could see direct applications for routine documents. We discussed that the memorywriter could be easily learned by new employees (just as they had learned—independently and with the use of the reference manual). Finally, I explained that the Xerox was upgradable. (They had used machines with upgraded memory.) This discussion was very relaxed, and the students seemed to enjoy it. *I plan to use the preliminary discussion approach more often in the future.*

The second factor in this assignment's success was that many students went through the reference manuals looking for facts and, in the process, found out things even I had not known. They examined some features we had not even practiced, and many students truly thought through the practical applications. For example, some of the medical secretaries envisioned how the FORM feature could be used for patient records. This feature allows setting up the format (margins, tabs, and spacing) for routine documents. These format instructions can then be stored for future use. These students were excited about their discovery and plan to put this information to good use. Another interesting development was that some students made good productivity comparisons of the two machines (especially for repetitive letters) based upon their own experiences.

My one regret concerning this assignment is that it was due as part of the final exam. I did not have the opportunity to share the truly unique responses with the other students. Also, many students never even had the opportunity to read my comments. Next semester, I will be certain that we have time for a follow-up discussion and sharing period.

Conclusion

My writing-intensive office procedures course was a success because it allowed me to establish a better rapport with my students while maintaining professional standards and demonstrating practices common in the work place. I was able to show students how to learn without a teacher through their own resourcefulness and ability to ask questions about the situation they are involved in. The best students particularly, the ones who went after the bonus points, got a lot of experience learning in real-life working situations.

I encourage all business teachers to develop similar assignments. Here are a few hints that may help.

First, let me assure any teacher considering a writing-intensive program that regular course content does not have to be changed, and not all writing assignments need to be graded. Assignments can be built around key concepts of the course. Brief writing assignments are very effective in evaluating the students' understanding of reading and/or lab assignments. The writing assignments can simply be notebook or journal entries.

Students could be asked to define terms, explain concepts and procedures, or simply to summarize what has been learned on a particular day, causing them to re-think the material. As a result, their understanding is deepened and retention increased. The instructor also has opportunities to catch misunderstandings in the early stages. Explain to the students that you are primarily interested in basic ideas—and why. Stress that they explain in their own words, not just copy information from the text.

There is no real reason to give grades for written work. By avoiding them, you can take the pressure off of students and save yourself additional work. Many times, to show that I have noted the work done by the students, I simply go around the room and quickly stamp their papers before the discussion begins. (I have a stamp with my name on it.) During the discussion, each student can assess his/her own work and add notes to it. If some students have not completed the assignment, they are asked to take notes; and I encourage oral discussion on their part. Then, I collect the papers at the end of the class period. Students receive either one check or two (one for outside preparation, one for the discussion session). Any students who were absent can turn in the assignment for one (partial) credit; this policy also encourages attendance (a general departmental goal). I have discovered that more students do the work (and do not copy someone else's) more readily when the grading is unstructured and not threatening.

Sometimes, for variety, I simply collect the assignments, read them, and make notes about common misunderstandings. These misunderstandings are discussed during the next class period. I also share the best papers with the class, thus helping build the students' confidence and pride in their work.

When writing is viewed as just another way to prepare for class and as another way to learn, pupils relax about writing and become better communicators in general. They become more fluent in expressing their ideas, and they are more likely to volunteer comments when they have already formulated the answers more definitely in their own minds. Therefore, discussions can actually incorporate more material, and better integration of ideas takes place—a goal in any class.

Longer, graded assignments, however, also have a place in our classes. They can be on-the-job type assignments (memos, letters, reports, analyses, excerpts for instruction manuals, recommendations). These assignments take on a different purpose: they are intended to convey information to someone else, such as a client, a co-worker, or the boss. Sometimes the content will still be the most important feature; but, at the same time, they need to have a professional sound and appearance. They must be *mailable* or *usable* depending upon the audience who will be reading the information. Thus, the percentage of the grade that will be based on mechanics will vary; be sure to explain this principle to the students *before* they begin the assignments.

These assignments can be brought to class, critiqued by peers, and revised to reflect any suggestions made. If students approach a critique session as everyday, on-the-job cooperation, they can do a good job. Sometimes, I find that the students are actually more critical that I would have been. Allowing time for revision goes along with course objectives of developing pride in one's work, follow-through of assignments, and meeting deadlines. Also, the editing process develops the ability to communicate, which is a valuable skill in itself. In the long run, promotions of even highly competent office workers will depend upon their ability to communicate.

My students never questioned being given writing assignments. In fact, their reactions were positive and many took advantage of the bonus when offered. I am convinced that the students performed better and learned more as a result of the written work, and I intend to continue using writing in the course.

Editor's Commentary

Ronnie Leiker discovered a form of assignment that partakes of the world-of-work model while at the same time accomplishing the goals of writing as learning. This approach is particularly clear in the assignment entitled "I Respect Your Opinion." Here the students are asked to write a report in a real-world form (office memorandum that offers a recommendation) which reinforces material they have learned in class (the functions of different kinds of typewriters with memory); the assignment therefore fulfills both a performance objective (business communication) and a cognitive objective. It is an ingenious, but simple assignment that could be readily adapted to many kinds of occupational courses.

The great majority of Ronnie's assignments are based on the writing-as-learning model, and, true to that model, Ronnie tends to avoid harsh evaluative techniques and to use student writing as a basis for class discussion. For a fuller understanding of this philosophy, see Agnes Robinson's discussion in Chapter 27.

Chapter 13

Writing to Learn How to Teach in a Dental Hygiene Program

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All senior dental hygiene students at El Paso Community College are required to participate in a Plaque Control Program, a health care plan for individual patients that involves work from several courses. This, we felt, was a natural place to incorporate writing into our curriculum. The Plaque Control Program spans three sessions in which students work closely with and educated dental clinic patients. During the first and second sessions, our students write summaries of patient's visits and outline a treatment plan. At the end of the third session, each student must complete a Plaque Control Case History. The capstone course of our program, DENH 3220, cannot be passed without the completion of plaque control histories on two patients. To our students (and to us), the Plaque Control Program should be the most vital phase of the students' learning.

At this point in their education, the seniors have completed all of their general studies, all of the basic sciences, all of the dental sciences, and have mastered all of the required dental hygiene skills. But now they must take all of this information, along with other information being taught at this time, and put it into responsible, practical patient education. And then, they must be prepared when they graduate to use all this information in a very condensed form which should produce beneficial changes in their patients in private practice.

In the Plaque Control Programs that were written haphazardly, students would turn in records of treatment that were incomplete, had no evaluation, no complete sentences, no substance—basically nothing that substantiated that they had provided adequate patient treatment or patient education.

A lot of the fault was ours. In class we taught our students to take notes in fragments, creating fragmented thinking. In clinic we taught our students to write in phrases and abbreviations, which encouraged abbreviated thinking. And we taught plaque control basically the same way—cut and dry—brushing and flossing—allowing no creativity in teaching the patient.

Our main objective for using writing assignments in the Plaque Control Program was to help the students synthesize their education and skills and apply them to comprehensive patient education—creating patient care that was truly meaningful to both patients and students. In doing so, we would be teaching them how to gather and interpret patient information, how to evaluate the patient information, and how to plan patient treatment from their interpretation and evaluation. We felt having the students use different types of writings, particularly abstract writings, would help them achieve these objectives.

Since the senior students were together in three different classes which contributed information to the final product of plaque control, we used each class to do a different type of assignment. This provided more time spent in writing without taking up too much time in just one class. In the previous semester we had prepared our students to write; we had introduced them to various assignments in Preventive Clinic II—Senior Seminar, using both the classroom and clinic environment. The students were convinced that written communication was essential in their technical profession, and they were receptive of the additional writing assignments.

Abstracts

The first assignment was conducted in Dental Practice Orientation. We assigned abstracts to help the students extract and condense information just as they would be doing with their patients when they were conducting their patient attitude/dental education exams and gathering dietary/nutrition information for future evaluation. The abstracts, however, served two purposes. Not only did the students learn how to extract and condense valuable information from the patient and the articles, but they also learned new information from the articles which could be used in the patient care education.

We required students to write three abstracts of professional articles and one evaluation of a professional journal. Additional abstracts of relevant articles could be written for extra credit. These writings were done before and during the Plaque Control Program.

At this point, our main concern was the time required to grade the abstracts. We came up with a possible solution: Instead of allowing the students to do all abstracts on their own, we would allot time in a class session for the following procedure:

1. The students evaluate an assigned article in class.
2. The students are provided with written criteria sheets.
3. The students read the articles silently for about ten minutes.
4. The students form small groups (about 3 students per group) and spend thirty minutes writing an abstract of the article.
5. One group member from each group reads their abstract aloud.
6. The class grades each abstract according to the given criteria.

Summaries

The second assignment, which was given in Preventive Clinic III where the Plaque Control Program actually took place, was to summarize each patient appointment at the end of the visit.

By the time the students dismiss their patient from the first plaque control visit, the students have performed fourteen different plaque control procedures. After extracting and condensing the patient information, the students must internalize—and from that develop a personalized patient treatment plan. In order to help them retain all of this information, we had them write a complete summary of the patient's visit and needs, which becomes a part of the patient's case history. And from the summaries, the students would provide an outline of their proposed treatment plan which is approved by the instructor.

The writing was free form and eventually graded. The students were allowed to write these summaries at home, and we encouraged them to spend time thinking about the visits and the definite needs of the patient.

Regrettably, some of the students became redundant in the later summaries, by merely changing or adding one or two words of the previous summaries to create a "new" summary. It made us think there was a possibility that the students were not really thinking about what they were doing clinically. Additionally, we saw a lack of creativity for treatment planning with the repeated patient summaries.

But students who took the time to think and write found the summaries to be their road maps which helped them to see where they had been, where they needed to go, and how they were going to get there. Also, they were able to make any necessary changes in their treatment plan at the appropriate times. From this point, they were able to move easily into the comprehensive patient case histories.

Case Histories

As you can see, we believe the Plaque Control Program is a holistic program in educating the patient beyond just brushing and flossing. We want to steer our students away from the ritual of being just "teeth cleaners" and guide them into being educators. We did not want them merely to teach their patients' brushing and flossing, but instead, to instruct and care for the patient in ways harmonious to each patient's economical, social, educational, and even physical background. Therefore, in order for our students to handle the patient's needs comprehensively, we needed to help them write comprehensively. So we concluded our writing assignments with the Plaque Control Patients' Case Histories.

At the end of the Plaque Control Program, the students were assigned to develop a comprehensive case history of each of their two plaque control patients. The students were given criteria to follow, and the case history would eventually be graded along with the completed program documentation. We told them we would be looking for an analysis the patient's health, a rationale for the patient's Plaque Control Program, including an individualized patient care and education plan, and, finally, interpretation of the collected data. This final document was to be based on all of the previous summaries, dietary analysis, and other patient information gathered.

Unfortunately, some students did not follow the criteria. However, when we received the case histories from the students who did follow the criteria, we saw excellent, comprehensive reports with valuable patient information. We then realized that our main goal had been met: The students had finally achieved synthesis in their thinking, and this synthesis allowed them to provide holistic patient care education. The students even felt rewarded by the changes they saw in their patients and were confident that these changes were not temporary. They were surprised at their own level of understanding they had acquired over the past two years. They were also amazed at their ability to take that knowledge and put it into responsible, practical application for the benefit of another.

Our initial objectives were to teach our students how to extract and gather information, condense that information, summarize evaluations, and develop comprehensive patient care education. However, we found that we were additionally helping the students to accomplish other equally important objectives such as how to counsel as well as educate, truly care about the patient as well as provide patient care, implement new information as well as gather information, and synthesize as well as to view the patient as a whole.

In addition to accomplishing and surpassing our objectives for our students, we have made a discovery about ourselves: As we wrote this article, we continued to see areas we were deficient in teaching our students how to educate their patients. But because we had written the situation out, we could immediately locate those problems and will be able to correct them with our future students. As *we* wrote, we learned how to teach.

Editor's Commentary

Elia Chacon and Tana Whiteman showed their students the important parallel between teaching and learning. Many of the participants in our project have accomplished learning objectives through peer review and the interchange of information in interactive classroom settings. But, because of the added dimension of having *patients* who need to be educated as well, Elia and Tana were able to add a further level of communication. Before the students can educate the patients, they must educate themselves; and, during their education of the patients, they learn more about what they are teaching. Writing can reinforce this learning at every stage of the process, as many of our teachers in health care programs have discovered.

This chapter states very well three important functions that writing can serve in a course that is information-based (as opposed to skill-based). (1) It helps students to *gather* information; nothing will show gaps in research faster than trying to write from inadequate data. (2) It forces students to *interpret* information; uninterpreted data presented in writing will seem incoherent or, to use Elia and Tana's word, "fragmented." (3) It provides a concrete basis so that students can *plan* further work; until plans are set down in writing, they may seem vague or incomplete.

Of course, in vocational-technical education, we do not want to draw too strong of a distinction between information-based objectives and skill-based objectives. One kind of objective supports the other. This is certainly the case with Elia and Tana's writing assignments. By learning effective methods of locating important information and summarizing that data in an effective method, the students learned how best to serve their patients as teachers—an important component of their role as practicing dental hygienists.

Part Four

Writing to Accomplish Professional Goals

Chapter 14

A Writing-Intensive Course in Fashion Promotion

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As director of fashion merchandising in the Odessa College Mid-Management Department since 1984, I have become increasingly aware of new demands present within the fashion retailing industry. Exemplary of these demands are area retailers' concerns about the lack of basic skills—reading, writing, spelling, simple math—exhibited by a growing number of entry-level employees. According to industry members who serve on Odessa College's mid-management advisory committee, knowledge of retailing gained through vocational-technical classes ceases to be an asset to those who cannot communicate their ideas.

The faculty of Odessa College's Mid-Management Department had, simultaneously, become aware of this same decline of student skill levels. To further assess this problem, the department had instituted a literacy screening program for all first-semester freshmen students. During the first year of testing, an average of 35 percent of the students in each class performed below eighth grade reading level. Demonstrated writing skills were found to be equally deficient. Several students reported that they had been required to complete only one formal exposition during their four years in high school. Others said they had learned little about writing in the public schools. Aside from the lack of basic grammatical skills, students were, generally, unable to clearly express their ideas in writing. Further, many students made a tremendous effort to avoid pen-and-paper skills. Remedial work through Odessa College's reading and writing laboratories was offered; however, attendance was optional and only a few students made an effort to improve their performance in these two areas.

In the spring of 1986, to emphasize the importance of written and oral communications skills in the "real world" of fashion merchandising, I restructured the sophomore-level course in Fashion Promotion. The result was a writing-intensive, pre-professional format, complete with exercises based on simulations in media and special event planning, reporting, and evaluation. For the purposes of this article, *writing-intensive* is defined as assignments designed to incorporate and encourage written responses for both original and researched formats. *Pre-professional* is defined as exercises and experiences taken from professional situations and simulated within the classroom environment. Within the context of the fashion promotion course, these included but were not restricted to reporting formats, personnel and special events evaluations, all promotional/advertising-related activities, personal resumes, and professional correspondence.

All in-class and out-of-class written assignments were integrated into the traditional study of fashion promotion—media relations, personal selling, fashion show production, special events, target marketing, consumer surveys, advertising, public relations and promotional planning and budgeting.

The objectives for the writing-intensive fashion promotions curriculum were:

- To develop internal and external communications skills.

- To develop writing skills necessary for professional achievement/advancement.
- To develop the ability to concisely express original thoughts/ideas.
- To encourage and develop confidence in creative abilities (relative to special event planning/advertising approaches to target markets).
- To develop basic and specialized writing skills.
- To develop basic and specialized vocabulary to communicate effectively within fashion retailing industry.

Because of my experience with vocational-technical students and their negative reactions to any type of written exercise, I did not enter the writing-intensive fashion promotion class with any unrealistic expectations. Students seemed to be intimidated by written assignments, expressing feelings of insecurity and lack of confidence in their ability to tackle written tasks.

It was, therefore, my approach in introducing the writing-intensive curriculum, to begin with basic information. The first assignments involved familiar facts to be presented in a certain format, i.e., ". . . write your personal resume. Now, look through *Women's Wear Daily* classified advertising and write a letter in response to a help-wanted ad that appeals to you."

Once students had successfully produced their resumes, assignments were structured to build upon that first positive experience/accomplishment. Writing assignments were reinforced by weekly vocabulary tests. . . including retailing/fashion terminology as well as promotional jargon and stylistic descriptions (used in the section on writing style show commentary).

Toward the end of the semester, it was apparent that students who had displayed little confidence in their writing skills and who had voiced—rather loudly—concern about written assignments, were complaining less. Further, many were producing some very adequate—even excellent—written assignments by the end of the year. Most students were extremely gratified to learn that they could, in fact, communicate their thoughts and ideas. . . and that these thoughts and ideas were acceptable, yea, even exciting in their potential impact in real world retailing.

Assignments

Four writing tasks were assigned in the class. Each is described in the following subsections:

Maintaining a Professional Journal

Objectives. Students will become conditioned to writing summaries of information to be incorporated into weekly or monthly reports for management. In applying information used in their professional journal to class lectures, exercises and discussions, the student will:

- Grow in his or her awareness of fashion promotion trends on a local, regional, and national scale.

- Become acquainted with local retailing professionals and their goals for promotional programs.
- Practice evaluating local fashion showings and special events in terms of effectiveness as a marketing and communications tool.
- Read—on a regular basis—fashion publications, local newspapers and trade publications.
- Learn to write in a concise style in order to adhere to space limitations.

Statement of the Assignment. The journal-keeping assignment for the semester reads this way:

> Each student is responsible for compiling a journal of no less than three entries per week (48 expected for the entire semester). Each journal entry is to be no longer than two paragraphs and may consist of one or more of the following:
>
> - Personal interviews with local retailers on topics relative to promotional goals, new trends changes in target markets, advertising plans, rationale behind special events.
> - Articles on current topics from newspapers, magazines or trade publications, i.e., forecasts, changes in major retail organizations, special events, etc.
> - Your personal evaluation of local fashion trends, new advertising/PR programs, critiques of local fashion showings, visual displays or other significant aspects of local fashion retailing.

In my more benevolent moments, I provided materials—magazines, *Women's Wear Daily*, etc.—for review and allowed ten minutes of class time for journal entires. My rationale was that students could consult with me as they progressed through their journalistic efforts. Often our consultations were no more than cheerleading sessions. However, I highly recommend a change of routine in handling this very constructive, though often tedious, assignment format.

Potential Problems with Administering the Assignment. I was aware of three potential problems going into the semester. The first was that students would wait until the last minute to assemble their journals. I circumvented this tendency by checking them on a periodic basis, most often unannounced. The second problem was the fact that many students have the tendency to copy articles, word-for-word. This ceased after the students learned that they would receive no credit for work that was not expressed in their own words. Finally, I expected and did, indeed, experience that this type of assignment requires several hours of time—reviewing the content to make sure that there is a balanced variety; and, to correct the grammatical and spelling mistakes. (To assure that my time was well spent, each journal correction was rewritten and then added to a final notebook.)

Benefits. The benefits, in addition to the objectives listed above, may be described as the routine and discipline of interpreting facts, condensing ideas and boiling entire articles down to a few sentences and paragraphs. Further, the simple act of putting pen to paper made writing a less formidable task.

Writing Resumes and Letters of Application

Objectives. Through satisfactory completion of the resume assignment (which may require a few rewrites), the student will:

- Create a current, personal resume to be updated and used for future job interviews.
- Become familiar with various segments of resume and activities that could be incorporated into professional experience during their college training, i.e., coordination of style shows, etc.
- Through discussion of assignment, increase awareness of how resumes are evaluated by employers. They will also gain skill in evaluating resumes from a manager's viewpoint.
- Practice organizing information into specific categories and logical order for presentation.

Through satisfactory completion of the "letter of application" exercise, the student will:

- Become acquainted (again) with the business letter format.
- Practice responding to inquiries stated in help-wanted advertisement, and presenting personal abilities in the best format.
- Practice with business letter format, correct spelling, and grammar.
- Student will have a model letter of application that may be used for future reference.

Conditions. This assignment is made during the first or second class period during the semester. Formats are handed out during the first class. It is extremely convenient, in fact, to have students write a rough draft of their resume to be turned in the second class period. These drafts are then reviewed, comments and suggestions made in writing and then returned to the student for the first formal draft. This is also an extremely good way to get to know your students early in the semester.

Statement of the Assignment. The resume and letter of application assignment consists of two parts.

This is an assignment of two parts:

1) Following the format with accompanying explanations of each section provided, please create an up-to-date resume of your educational background, professional experience, personal and career goals, honors and awards and personal references. Turn in your first draft during the next class period for comments and suggestions prior to typing your first formal draft.

2) After you have completed your first resume and draft, use the issues of *Women's Wear Daily* in the Mid-Management LRC to locate a "help wanted" ad that sounds interesting to you. Then, write a letter of application for that particular position, using the format provided. Be sure

> that there are no punctuation errors, grammatical mistakes or misspelled words. Remember, how your letter looks tells a future employer just as much as what the letter says.

Potential Problems. The problem I found was that students could not think of their experiences as relevant to their professional resume, i.e., many said they had nothing to put down in the "honors/awards" section. Yet, these were the same students who were football queens, secretaries for the junior class and vacation bible school teachers at their church for three years. No other real problems were encountered other than the usual mechanical language problems we are accustomed to seeing every day. With this assignment, my expectation was that every student would have the experience of categorizing aspects of their lives into a resume which would become a tool with which they could launch their careers.

Benefits. This assignment provides a good exercise for resume and letter writing and an excellent basis for a first discussion—a "let's get to know each other" type of exercise. There were no inhibitions. All the information was inherent, so there was no need for outside research or prior fashion knowledge. It was, in fact, a good way to start the semester. Students also, through my evaluations and suggestions, became somewhat familiar with what would be expected as far as written assignment standards, and yet found it a "user friendly" environment. There was no way to fail this exercise unless it was not turned in, so it was, overall, a positive experience for the class.

Developing a Fashion Show Commentary

Objectives. Before this assignment, the students have written—in class—descriptions of ten garments. These descriptions were read in class and critiqued by the students. The abbreviated commentary assignment is, then, designed to provide the student with:

- Practice choosing appropriate garments for fashion show concepts.
- Practice writing descriptions of garments to be used in the fashion show setting.
- Practice in assembling a mini-commentary for a formal ramp showing.
- Practice working with the elements of the written fashion commentary.
- Practice using the written word as a reinforcement to visual presentation of garments in fashion show setting.

Conditions. This assignment is made toward the end of the semester, giving the students approximately three months to polish their writing skills and gain the confidence necessary to create a fashion show concept.

Statement of the Assignment. The fashion show commentary assignment reads as follows.

> Now that you have had experience in describing various types of garments, the next step is creating sequences between each garment description to present a lively and informational commentary for your fashion show.

Based on your original theme and concept for this show, visit several stores of your choice and select no fewer than five garments that you would like to present in the show. During your store visit, write a complete description of each of these garments as well as any accessories you select to show with the garments. Now, you are ready to write the commentary. Be sure to include the following:

- An attention-getting introduction.

- Descriptions of each garment with monologue between to make the show flow from one look to the next.

- An effective closing that will assure the audience of the message you have tried to convey within the commentary.

Potential Problems. By this point, students were extremely "into" the professional promotions mode and I really had no problems. Generally, the assignments were extremely gratifying and well done, with a flair and a good marriage between visual and voiced presentation.

Benefits. The benefit of this particular assignment is that it crosses the line between the mundane and everyday into the stereotypical "glamour" of fashion. Working on this and other related projects presented the students with an opportunity to create, create, create. Some presentations, granted, were more tasteful and had more fashion savvy than others. However, all were extremely impressive for a "first time out" in the promotions environment, and the writing was a 100 percent improvement over the first of the semester. My guess is that the assignment was relevant to many of the individual students' goals, and therefore, not really viewed as something demanding or threatening.

Developing a Special Events Calendar

Objectives. The purpose of this exercise was to allow the student some "creative space" and to apply some of the principles learned, thus far, in fashion promotion. During the formulation of this calendar and upon completion of the assignment, the student will:

- Create a calendar of special events that will be attention-getting and financially successful for a department store.

- Have the experience of coordinating media and other activities to make the event successful.

- Consider the elements necessary for a special event, i.e., logistics, coordination, etc.

- Practice targeting various markets and evaluating effectiveness of events.

Conditions. This assignment is given mid-way through the semester, after the student has become more familiar with the function of promotions and the various possibilities of promoting fashion within the retail environment. It is usually a good idea to have a professional promotions coordinator speak to the class before making this assignment, just to assure that students are well aware of the responsibilities of planning a special events calendar.

Statement of the Assignment. Students created their special events calendars by responding to the following situation.

Special events, as they have been discussed in class, provide a vital part of a retailer's ability to communicate with, and attract patrons. Based on what you have learned, develop a six-month calendar of special events for Dillard's Department Store, with no fewer than two special events scheduled every month. Then write a rationale for your events that will include the following:

- Type of event?
- Other tie-in's?
- Who's in charge?
- Goal of event?
- Targeted audience?
- Theme?
- Media plan?
- How will you evaluate it?

Potential Problems. This type of assignment should carry a pass-fail grade, as I believe it would be impossible to grade subjectively. That's a problem in itself. Secondly, the student who will not venture out with his or her own ideas may give you some very unoriginal work, which will not stack up with the calendar developed by the student who is extremely creative. Evaluating these papers is extremely tedious because you will need to make suggestions about each entry on the calendar, including how to make it work better, if it doesn't work at all. Look carefully at the written rationales, as these will give you an idea of how the writing style is progressing, how the logical thinking and sequencing is coming, etc. Truthfully, I had several underlying motives for this assignment: confidence building around subject matter of the course, writing style, grammar, punctuation skills. I suppose I would admit to using this as a benchmark for several aspects of the course midway through the semester.

Benefits. These papers were shared, to some extent, in oral class presentations. Each of the ideas stimulated discussion and the students attempted to evaluate the success/failure potential of each calendar. This was done—surprisingly—in a very kind and helpful atmosphere, which made it a good experience for all involved. The planning and creative flavor of this assignment developed some extremely strong calendars. (As a footnote, the class voted on the 12 strongest events—one for each month of the year—and these were turned over to the special promotions department at Dillard's in Permian Mall. This especially pleased the students.)

Conclusion

Future retailing professionals will enter an industry that traditionally has offered dedicated newcomers any number of exciting opportunities. Over the past decade, however, the field of fashion merchandising has begun to demand more specialized skills and expertise that can only be obtained from pre-professional training on the post-secondary level.

To validate this observations, LaRue C. Manford and Mary K. B. Ericksen, members of the Southwest Texas State University faculty, recently addressed a survey to 475 professional retailers. The questionnaire also asked the respondents to rate the relevance of the current curriculum offerings for aspiring retail managers.

Representing retail establishments in Austin, Dallas, Houston, El Paso, Lubbock, Corpus Christi, and San Antonio, the managers indicated that writing skills—and the ability to communicate ideas on paper—are of major importance for individuals interested in a career in today's retail environment.

Based on the results of the writing-intensive fashion promotions course at Odessa College, I have observed that the ability to write effectively not only enhances the individual's performance level but also provides a number of important by-products, including:

- Increased self-confidence derived from expression of ideas/evaluations and positive feedback on written assignments.
- Increased ability/willing to share ideas with instructor and/or peers.
- Stimulation of creating thinking processes.
- Practice in the application of logical and sequential examination of options while solving problems posed in writing-intensive assignments. Exercising this routine led, in most cases, to more innovative solutions.
- Practical focus on language and its usage. (For some students, this was the first time sentence structure and/or grammar carried any immediate value.)
- Increased awareness of need for clear, concise communications, both written and oral.

Because of the variety of written assignments and activities offered during the semester, students appeared to participate more enthusiastically during in-class discussions and displayed a greater sense of accomplishment when their performance met or surpassed expressed standards. Coincidentally, overall class attendance dramatically improved.

The introduction of a writing-intensive course into the existing fashion merchandising curriculum was assessed as a positive step in providing pre-professional experiences for Odessa College students because:

- Students felt that their writing experiences helped to define personal skills while refining knowledge gained from previous course work. Many commented that they believed they had gained abilities that would help them succeed in their chosen careers.
- Students performed written assignments and other projects with greater attention to detail, a sense of pride in their efforts and an increased confidence in the value of their individual contributions.

The pre-professional written simulations assigned were intentionally structured to emphasize individual performance in a highly-specialized industry, namely fashion merchandising. Wording within this environment truly changed a number of student attitudes.

These transformations became apparent in individual self-assessment. In several instances, this was the first time students believed they could, in fact, meet and fulfill the demands of professional retailing. Many said that they felt that their career plans were truly attainable. This new confidence was contagious, and by the end of the semester, the classroom was filled with students who believed their ideas and insights would eventually revolutionize the world of retailing!

I would also add, at the risk of sounding overly dramatic, that the writing-intensive aspect of this course and the resulting student performances made it one of the most exciting experiences of my career as an educator.

Editor's Commentary

Alice Berthelsen has taken up writing across the curriculum not only because of the usefulness of writing assignments as teaching devices but also because she and her colleagues in fashion merchandizing realize that the requirements for general literacy and communication skills are becoming more stringent as employers deal daily with semi-literate employees who cannot work effectively in our information-based economy.

Alice decided to make the teaching of communication skills an integral part of her course goals, and in many ways she paid a high price for this decision. Thus, because she wanted to help the students improve their writing styles, she spent many hours marking errors on their papers; this work was often, she admitted, "tedious."

Teachers with the same high standards should notice a few points of Alice's practice that no doubt helped her students improve as communicators: (1) she frequently allowed students to revise for a higher grade, (2) she maintained a constant dialogue with the students and consulted with them about how to improve their written work, and (3) she spent time in class and assigned homework that would help students develop good language for the task at hand (current vocabulary, for example). She did not begin with high expectations about her students' abilities to communicate, but rather began by letting the students work with familiar material and gradually evolve an effective ability to communicate as they moved to newer, more challenging subject matter.

In Chapter 2, Jeanette Harris suggests an alternative to Alice's approach to grading student writing. According to this revised approach, you should "respond" to all writing, but "evaluate" (that is, mark errors and grade) only the most formal assignments. Alice could have, for example, given the students more leeway on their grammar and spelling in their journals, while applying tougher standards to world-of-work assignments like resumes and letters of application. However, even Alice's journal is a "*professional* journal," so she is absolutely consistent in her grading practices and in the professional quality she demands in *all* student writing.

The greater emphasis the individual teacher places upon the development of communication skills as a course objective, the greater attention he or she must give to the development and enforcement of professional standards. Again we see how a clear statement of objectives is essential in every writing assignment.

Chapter 15

Communications in High Technology

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When asked to attend a Drafting and Design Advisory Committee Meeting as a representative of the Physics Department, I looked forward to an evening of discussions of which CAD system to use or how much pipe drafting versus machine drafting should be taught. Little did I know that during the meeting some convictions that I have held for a long time would be strengthened by the comments of a representative from industry.

The evening started with an introduction of the persons present. Looking at the agenda, I saw "Course Revisions" and knew my first thoughts were correct. However, when the committee chairman started with "We need to get rid of this Communications course and spend more time on drafting" I sat up and listened. For about ten minutes the chairman talked about how useless this course was and how the time could be better spend drawing. No one in the room said a word, and I feel sure the chairman felt confident that he had won the battle.

Sitting on the right hand side of the chairman was a person who had been introduced as a Vice President of the local power company. Suddenly, without warning he interrupted the chairman. "The biggest problem in industry today is the inability to communicate." The chairman was shocked, to say the least, and just stared at the man. The Vice-President continued to say that he, himself, wrote notes which he could not understand an hour later; the president could not communicate with the vice-president and so on; he continually received memoranda with misspellings, incorrect grammar, and irrelevant information. After about five minutes he concluded by stating that the students should study and practice communications, both oral and written, as well as human relations, as soon as they started to school and should be required to use these skills daily throughout their course of study.

Other members of the committee then entered the discussion and the chairman knew he had lost. After about fifteen minutes, the committee concluded that the communications course should be retained and expanded and a human relations course should be added.

For years I had emphasized the need for communication skills. In my physics classes, students explained processes, made oral presentations of laboratory exercises, and made a fifteen-minute oral presentation in laser optics. Many of my colleagues felt that my techniques were wrong. The department chairman encouraged me to use true/false, multiple choice, and problem solving questions on tests. But the statements made by the industry representatives during the advisory committee meeting reinforced my feelings toward communications.

Incorporating Communication Tasks in a Laser-Optics Curriculum

In 1983, the Dean asked me to write a Laser Electro-Optics Curriculum for state approval. My task inventory had numerous questions concerning communication skills for laser technicians. All returned task inventories emphasized the importance of communication skills and human relations. Therefore, the curriculum included courses in oral and written communications, applied job relations, and technical report writing. While the first two courses were to be taught outside the Laser Department, technical report writing was approved as a laser course.

After the approval of the curriculum by the state, I set about developing the courses. During this entire process, the thought of requiring the students to communicate in all classes was in my mind. The use of laboratory notebooks, laboratory reports, and oral reports would be emphasized. In dealing with a high technology subject such as lasers, it is extremely important that the students understand the theory and be able to explain it in their own words and document all laboratory work. I decided to use this approach as a selling point to the students. If they understood why they were having to do this, I felt they would perform better. As you will see, it worked.

In March, 1984, the Laser Department enrolled its first class, eight students. Three years later the enrollment was 116. I think this proves that students will enroll in a program that emphasizes communications. All students know before they enroll what is going to be required, and also why it is required. The need for English, mathematics, job relations, and all other non-laser courses is explained. From the first class day when they have to stand up and introduce themselves to the entire department, they know they will have to communicate.

In the Laser Department there are no true/false, multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, or matching questions on any test. All tests ask the student to define, describe, and explain. Verbatim restatements of textbook material are not acceptable. Students must define, describe, and explain in their own words, which requires real thinking rather than mere memorization.

Writing Assignments

Laboratory Notebooks

All laser courses require students to use a laboratory notebook. A format for the notebook is provided in the first class, Introduction to Lasers, and it must be used. The notebook is subject to being graded at any time. This grade is normally not used to determine the course grade; it is used to help students develop their laboratory techniques. In some of the advanced courses, the laboratory notebook is used to establish course grades. Hopefully, by the time students reach these courses, their notebook skills are very good.

In courses such as Laser Electro-Optic Components and Laser Electro-Optic Devices, students are given a list of specifications for a component or device. Catalogues and sales brochures are available in the department library. Students must use these resources or others they may have and find a minimum of three items which meet the specifications given. The next task is to select one of the three items and document why it was selected. During a class period, students must explain to their fellow students and to the instructor why they selected the particular component or device. Generally, a discussion ensues because someone else made a different selection. Once again the students are forced to think.

During the last term before graduation, students take two courses which demand communication skills—Applied Optics and Laser Troubleshooting. The students in Applied Optics are placed in two- or three-person teams and assigned a laboratory project in interferometry. Since time does not permit all students to participate in all projects, oral presentations and laboratory notebooks are used to disseminate the information to the entire class. All group members must be prepared to give the oral presentation and to answer questions about the laboratory notebook or the techniques used in the project.

The Laser Troubleshooting students must maintain meticulous notebooks. If a laser system breaks down, the students are required to repair it. When they encounter a problem, they must communicate with the manufacturer to arrive at a solution. Sometimes this communication is written, but most generally it is given by telephone. If students have not maintained an accurate notebook or cannot communicate effectively, the problem is amplified and time is lost.

Research Papers

Students enrolled in the Laser Applications course choose a laser application in which they are interested. It is then their responsibility to research this application using at least three outside resources, write a 500-word paper on the subject and then deliver a thirty-minute oral presentation to the class. This assignment permits students to study an application which interests them and also is the start toward the 5000-word technical report. The topic chosen in Laser Applications will be the topic in Technical Report Writing. A member of the English Department holds a short discussion with the students at the beginning of the term, covering such topics as conducting library research, using note cards, and compiling a bibliography. The English instructor also is available to assist students even though they are not officially enrolled in an English course.

In the Laser Projects course, students are required to select a project in the laser field and to write a proposal for the project, complete with parts list and prices and a time schedule. Students have build such things as CO_2 lasers, nitrogen lasers, and fiber optic communication systems. Each student discusses the proposed project with he class and receives input from the other students. The class meets weekly to discuss progress, make updates, and analyze problems. The student must submit a final report, both oral and written, at the conclusion of the project. The course grade is determined by the proposal, the project itself, and the final report. If the project was not successful, but the students was able to document why and how to make it successful, the grade reflects the work accomplished. In other words, not all projects will succeed. But if one does not, the student will not suffer if he or she can explain why it did not succeed.

Involving English Teachers

As mentioned earlier, the technical report writing course was approved originally as a laser course. The English Department did not like this, but I had strong feelings and won. My feelings were based upon the inability of the English Department to evaluate the technical content of the papers. I had proposed that the grade be given jointly by an English instructor and by a Laser instructor. The average of the two grades would be the final grade. This idea was not acceptable to the English instructors, because they felt someone was invading their territory. This territorialism had to be broken down if the writing across the curriculum was going to work.

The biggest aid in breaking this barrier was getting the English instructors involved. Instead of my going to them, I asked them to come to me. This tactic brought them into my department. I then had students take them on tours of the department. English instructors came to advisory committee meetings. They were invited to all Laser Department functions, and they came. In other words, they became involved. A change in English Department personnel helped, but the increased communications between the two departments is what led to cooperation.

You cannot do all this by yourself nor can the English Department. Give the English instructors some examples of technical writing in your field. Make them aware of how you feel about communications. Display a positive attitude about writing and request their assistance. It works and will make the tasks much easier for both departments. You are not an English expert and do not expect the English instructor to be an expert in your field. Cooperation gets the task accomplished.

The technical report writing course is now offered by the English Department with the dual grade. Students are required to turn in two copies of their writing—one to the English Department and one to the Laser Department. The English instructor grades the report solely on its literary merit; the Laser instructor grades it on its technical merit. The two instructors then collaborate to arrive at the final grade. This technique has proven most effective. Students know that every aspect of mechanics and style will be checked as well as the technical correctness of the paper. As a result, they produce better reports.

Conclusion

Generally, vocational-technical students have a negative attitude toward writing and English courses. Of course, this also holds true for mathematics, psychology, and physics courses. But the idea of having to put one's ideas on paper or to speak them in front of a group is frightful. The need for communication skills must be emphasized always by all instructors, not merely the English instructors. I have yet to attend an educator meeting or an advisory committee meeting where the need for communication skills was not emphasized.

Yet, there are some faculty in the technology areas who continue to indicate they do not know why their students must take English courses. Perhaps they should also be taught the "art of communicating." Persons normally fear an area in which they are weak or know little about. Students many times will reflect the attitude toward a subject similar to their primary instructor's attitude. Be positive, and the student will be positive. Mold the students' attitude from negative to positive. Emphasize the need, provide the help required, and the student will get a real sense of accomplishment.

One method of molding the students' attitudes which I have found to be quite effective is requiring them to attend Advisory Committee meetings. When the representatives from industry with whom the student may find employment state the need for both oral and written communication skills, students listen and respond. Students will do what is necessary for the job market.

As you can see from the examples cited, it is possible and desirable to use communications in high technology classes. The need for communication skills must be emphasized at all times by all instructors. Perhaps the best example of how the student reacts is from a support class for the Computer Electronics Department taught by the Laser Department. The tests in Computer Electronics courses are multiple choice, true/false and fill-in-the-blank tests. When the student is told what the testing in the Laser Department will be, sometimes they rebel. However, after a class session last term, an electronics student approached me and said, "Thanks for making me think again." In order to communicate, one must think. Thinking stimulates the mind and makes the student a better learner and ultimately a better employee.

Editor's Commentary

Robert Reid shares the firm convictions of many of our participants that communication skills can only be learned if they are reinforced at every stage and in every course in a student's technical education. In his courses in the laser technology program at Texas State Technical Institute—Amarillo, the students must represent themselves through communication from the very first day of class, when they have to stand up and introduce themselves to the class; from that point on, oral and written communication is an habitual activity. We think that this regularity of communication requirements—along with the wide-open nature of the discussion and dissemination of information that prevails in his class format—explains the lack of resistance among the students in Bob's program. Once students get used to the idea of some activity, they grow to accept it, especially if they understand that it is clearly tied to the objective of helping them to perform better in their professional careers after school.

Some years ago, the Colorado School of Mines, one of the best engineering colleges in the country, did a survey to determine the progress of their graduates in industry. They found that too often, their former students, though they had started in excellent entry-level positions, remained on the ground floor, rarely learning how to improve themselves within the company. This study prompted the School of Mines to institute a curriculum much like that of Bob and his colleagues, stressing the need for communication and public relations. It is very clear that habitual written and oral communication assignments in the classroom can provide technical students with the kinds of skills they need to succeed and prepare them mentally for their careers.

Most of our participants have added writing assignments in addition to "objective tests," but Bob has totally replaced multiple choice and true/false testing with tests that require written answers. (For an alternative, see Ina Midkiff-Kennedy's approach to objective testing in Chapter 4.) His belief, shared by many in the writing-across-the-curriculum movement, is that written answers demand that the students work at a higher cognitive level and therefore retain and understand more of what they have learned for the test. Bob's course design provides a model for those who would like to use traditional academic writing assignments (research papers, essay tests) in vocational-technical education. (See Mary Ann DeArmond's discussion of the benefits of this approach in the section entitled "Philosophical Differences" in Chapter 26 below.)

Chapter 16

A Writing-Intensive Course in Advertising

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The Business of Advertising is a freshman course for Advertising Art majors at San Antonio College. It is the most data-intensive course in a practical, project-oriented program. It is the only course in which written tests make up the majority of the grade. The course provides an overview of the advertising industry from a marketing point of view. Its content is similar to Introduction to Mass Communication courses found in other Advertising, Marketing, Communication, Journalism, and Radio, TV and Film programs. The emphasis is on advertising theory and terminology. Its lecture format is supplemented by tours, videos, and guest speakers from the professional community.

There are no prerequisites for The Business of Advertising. It has been evident that many students who come directly from high school to San Antonio college lack basic writing skills. On the average, they read at the 9th grade level and write at grade 8 1/2. Usually our students have not taken more than one college level writing course (Freshman Composition I). Many do not even have that. The majority of our students have enrolled in our program to develop their natural talent in the visual arts so they can get a job in advertising or design. Often, they have an aversion to English and mathematics. They are not aware that oral and written communication skills are essential to advancement in the advertising world. They do not know that although their hand skills (layout and production) will get them in the door, being unable to write will keep them on the ground floor.

Why I Got Involved

My initial curiosity in writing across the curriculum was prompted by self-serving motives. Could the project be a vehicle to retain students within our program rather than farm them out to the English Department for writing competency? When I reviewed the college's requirements for writing-intensive courses (60 percent of the grade and 2,000 words), I realized that I didn't have to revise The Business of Advertising at all to meet the minimum requirements, due to the weight (seventy-five percent) and volume of written tests. Nor did I have to require my students write an essay or term paper.

When I attended the first seminar, the philosophy of writing across the curriculum lit a spark in me. The WAC project emphasized process-oriented writing (free writing, writing as doing) and applied writing for specific audiences. The practical application of these concepts seemed very compatible with the process of creating advertising. I got so excited about the potential for student learning that I resolved to alter my projects and experiment with the new techniques within a new course structure.

When I made this commitment to revise The Business of Advertising, the timing could not have been worse. Our program offered the course only in the spring. I was scheduled to teach two sections, and there was only one week before the spring semester. I had no choice but to hand out obsolete class plans and project outlines the first day and overhaul the class while it was in progress.

I knew that the term "writing intensive" could be intimidating to visually oriented students who avoided writing whenever possible. One of my primary goals was that students have less fear of writing after taking the course. I didn't want to turn them off before they started. I was worried that they would be apprehensive, even paranoid, about the changes in the course and might resent or resist doubling their project workload.

Warding Off Student Resistance in Planning the Course

I cushioned the impact of the changes by explaining exactly what I intended to do, and why, on the first day. I acknowledged the students' fears and told them that I understood they were more interested in visual imagery than verbal expression. I demonstrated my enthusiasm for the project and my excitement with its potential. I stressed the rewards they could reap. I communicated the very real need for copywriting and persuasive argument skills in the professional advertising world. I explained how lack of writing skills might handicap them, stymie their promotion and leave them on the bottom rung of the career ladder. I involved them in the experiment by telling them I would use their input to revise the course and advised them that they had a choice. If they didn't want to participate they could transfer into a non-writing-intensive section without charge or penalty.

I was absolutely astonished when not one student transferred or dropped. I still am not sure whether I waylaid their fears, piqued their sense of adventure, or, like any good salesman, simply anticipated their objections. But I do know that their co-operation and genuine enthusiasm were essential to the success of this project.

One curious statistic emerged from the survey questionnaire at the end of the 1987 semester. While only one student admitted being intimidated by writing at the outset, twenty-five percent of the students said they were less intimidated after taking the course. The result replicated itself in 1988. Again, only one student admitted initial apprehension, yet 33 percent said they were less intimidated after taking the course. Perhaps they were hesitant to admit their initial apprehension in light of my selling job.

Clip Assignments

A clip file is a morgue of excellent ads. It is compiled by the student and used as a reference library to stimulate creative processes and break through creative blocks. It should not be confused with clip art (copyright-free, camera-ready art).

Typically, I required submission of ten clip assignments, each consisting of two or three specific types of ads such as new product introduction, national advertising, co-operative advertising, etc. These assignments allow me to test the students' comprehension of advertising jargon, evaluate their aesthetics, and help them to differentiate between effective and ineffective advertising. In the spring of 1987, I did not reduce the number of clip examples and, for the first time, I requested 50-100 words of commentary on each ad. I added a formal question: "Why is the ad that you selected more interesting, more eye catching, more persuasive, and/or potentially more effective than other ads which have the same purpose?"

One might think that asking such a formal, structured question might be somewhat limiting. However, the students took my suggestion to heart to "feel free to comment on any features of the ad you find notable or to comment on advertising in general." Among creative individuals, even the most pedestrian question could elicit a rapturous and uninhibited response such as:

> *I love their ads. . . When I see a Banana Republic ad I'm not looking at a magazine, I'm on an imaginary voyage (a safari if you will). Maybe it's the idea of entering a jungle and never coming out to the world of nine to five, maybe it's a paradise lost only to me.* (Dennis Lopez)

Simply put, my students used the questions as a springboard to personal expression (creative writing).

I hoped the commentary would help the students improve their ability to write grammatically correct English. But I was somewhat skeptical whether it could accomplish that goal. I was afraid that my feedback might be too limited, due to time restraints, to be of much value. I did not, at that time, perceive the intrinsic value of free writing.

I gave the students a complete list of clip assignments on the first day of class. Assignment content was coordinated with reading material and lectures. Due dates were specified on a daily schedule that I provided.

Each clip assignment and its commentary was submitted in a reclosable envelope, 8 1/2" x 11" or larger, that has the student's name on the front. Each specific example was labeled on the back with assignment number, type of example, the specific medium where it was found and their name, e.g., Assignment I, retail ad, *San Antonio Express News*, Jane Marshall.

From previous experience, I know that the examples are next to impossible to sort out, if unlabeled, because the same ad can be classified differently depending on where it's found. For example, a Crest ad in *Good Housekeeping* is a national consumer ad. The same ad in a dental journal is a professional business ad. I frequently use students' clip examples to stimulate class discussion or have the examples photographed for slide lectures. They must have the student's name on them so they can be returned afterwards.

To keep the students' focus on quality versus volume, they are instructed not to turn in more than what is required unless it is excellent. They are informed that bonus marks will be given for an exceptional clip file. I warn them that mixing good and mediocre ads in a clip file demonstrates lack of judgement and will adversely affect their grade.

If examples are incorrect or not good enough, the students may turn in make-ups. The final makeup date is two or three weeks before the end of the course. This prevents a deluge of clip assignments when the final test and project are due.

Was there an unanticipated value to writing commentary on the clip assignments? In my survey of the students, I found that seventy-five percent said there was such a benefit. The questions stimulated their thought, enhanced their ability to analyze, justify, and defend successful advertising. They said that the net result was that they paid more attention to advertising in general:

> *It made me think about the ads, instead of just looking at them.*
>
> *. . . to look deeper into an ad and find out what really made one better than another.*
>
> *I'm now more attentive—I eye all the ads.*

> *I found that analyzing the clip was very helpful to my creative copywriting efforts. That's what I would like to get into—copywriting.*

One student even stated:

> *I improved my writing skills tremendously.*

In the most recent version of the course, I reduced he number of clips from 32 to 24 to see if there would be a positive benefit to spending more time critiquing their commentary. This time, 92 percent cited benefits from writing the commentaries, a 17 percent increase. One student said, "Feedback from the teacher helped me to realize what a really good ad is."

I was still positively inundated with clip assignments and remakes. In the spirit of self-preservation, I asked the students what they would think of eliminating the clip commentary. I was flabbergasted when all but one student argued vehemently to keep it. They suggested limiting remakes to one to reduce the volume of reading and grading.

I'm still experimenting. The commentary obviously has significant value to the students. Next year I'm going to reduce the assignments from ten to five, limit remakes to one, give the students the full list of 32 options, allow them the freedom to select any two examples for each assignment, and increase the commentary to 75-100 words.

Creating an Advertisement

Typically the course's creative assignment was a print advertisement. I provided the research, and stated the advertising objective. Each student worked independently to develop a concept, write a headline, design, compose, and present an ad. Several students were assigned the same client to foster competition.

This time I structured the project as both an individual and a group project to more closely simulate professional agency procedure. For the first time, I assigned freshman students the research and writing of a Creative Work Plan. Although I had worked individually with budding copywriters, I had never tried to get everyone in a class (freshman or sophomore) to write body copy for an ad. This time I did.

Before I revised the class schedule, I set student learning objectives for the project. They were as follows:

- Students will simulate agency creative procedure as they work in a group to research and develop a Creative Work Plan.

- Students will understand that effective advertising is rooted in the discipline of research, problem definition and setting clear objectives.

- Students will learn how to develop and apply a typical advertising agency Creative Work Plan for a real client.

- Students will experience the competitive nature of advertising as they compete with their peers for the same client.

- Students will understand the function of a headline idea (visual plus headline).

- Students will learn to write advertising headlines or improve their ability to write headlines.

- Students will understand the function of body copy, namely to amplify and validate the headline idea by giving the facts and/or reasons why.

- Students will develop or improve their ability to write advertising body copy.

- Students will understand the difference between writing advertising copy for a target audience and writing grammatically correct English.

- Students will realize that a persuasive presentation, rational defense, and oral salesmanship of an ad are frequently just as important as the actual creative product. In other words: *It isn't creative if it doesn't sell.*

Because the project was designed to parallel agency procedure, it seems appropriate to explain it in that context.

Typically, when a new client is acquired by an agency or a new campaign is initiated, a team is assigned to the project. This team is made up of an Account Executive (liaison between the agency and the client—usually a marketing expert), a copywriter and an art director. Some agencies may also include a media planner, and production specialists (such as TV director) on the team. If research is necessary, the agency research department or an outside company conducts it.

Afterwards, the team develops the creative strategy and documents it on a Creative Work Plan. A Creative Work Plan is a succinct internal piece of agency communication, prepared by the agency and approved by the client before any creative work is begun.

It outlines the *product personality*, *target audience*, *category positioning*, and *principal competition*. It isolates the *key consumer benefit*, *selling position* (if any), main *problem* that the advertising will solve and the *key fact* on which the creative strategy turns. It states the *advertising objective*, which is expressed in communication terms and projects the *expected action* on the part of the target market.

Initially, I explain the project orally, divide each class into teams and assign each team a client. Five to a team seems to be optimum. I have worked successfully with one to three clients per class. Each team is responsible for researching its product or service and writing a Plan. I do not require that the students perform specific agency job descriptions, only that they work together.

The teams meet outside of class, accomplish the research and write a rough draft of the Plan, which I critique. The next week, we have a group critique of the rewritten Plans. Each group, in turn, writes its Plan on the board and all class members and myself critique it, point out strengths and flaws, and make suggestions.

Then the students break up into their groups and rewrite the Plan again. It is due at the next class. The resulting plans were clear, concise and workable.

After an agency Plan is approved by all concerned, the agency creatives (copywriters and art directors) work independently to come up with creative concepts or themes for the advertising campaign. They look for a unique selling proposition (USP) that will communicate the key benefit to the target market and meet the advertising objective. The individual students had a week to develop their concepts before an individual critique from the instructor. Our goal of the critique was to isolate their best ideas. The had an opportunity to rewrite and develop new ideas for the next class.

Once agency creatives have had an opportunity to develop their concepts the creative team meets (usually with the Account Executive) to brainstorm the creative.

This was my first attempt, ever, in simulating a brainstorming session. All of the students for one client put all their visual and verbal ideas up on the board, as many as 80-100 ideas. Then all the class members, regardless of client, participated. Any ideas that were off-target, unworkable, or did not meet the advertising objective were eliminated. Everyone's creative energy was focused on the ideas that were left. We improved some concepts, added new ones, rewrote headlines, suggested visuals, etc.

To be successful, an art director or copywriter must be able to function in a brainstorming session and offer their unedited, uninhibited, off-the-wall ideas without ego strings attached. In an agency, it is never me, my, mine. It is always we, our, ours. Most often at the end of a brainstorming session, no one individual can claim the final solution. Ownership is irrelevant. There is a piece of everyone in it. It belongs to the group. In my experience, students have a great deal of difficulty making the transition from their past experience of creating egocentric art work to the immersion of their ego necessary to function as a team member. Yet, teamwork is the essence of agency creative work.

Although not as uninhibited as a typical agency session, our simulation clearly demonstrated the synergy of group dynamics and the value of teamwork. This process was very effective in separating great ideas from good ideas and eliminating ideas inconsistent with the Plan.

This was the most rewarding classroom experience that I have ever had. I instigated, mediated, and refereed. Basically, I watched them teach each other. It was my first experience with peer teaching, but certainly not my last.

After a successful brainstorming session in which the concept or theme for a campaign has been decided, individual creatives work somewhat independently to produce the campaign in different media. They must maintain visual and verbal consistency in the ads so that the campaign can maximize its impact in the marketplace. At this point, the project continued on an individual basis. Students had an average of two to three more individual critiques and one group critique (before the final presentation) to select their best idea and best design, and to edit and revise their headlines and body copy.

The final presentation put the students under pressure. Both classes met together for the first time to simulate a real world speculative presentation as the students competed for the client.

After the presentation we had peer awards. The students voted for Best of Show, Best Copywriting, Best Visual, and Best Presentation. I gave out printed samples, donated by paper suppliers, as prizes. These awards have no relation to the student's final grade. However, they really do inflate their self image and build their confidence. Competition fosters good sportsmanship and actually seems to build camaraderie. The students help each other to make their projects the best they can possibly be. I have seen, from experience, that competition results in better concepts, better final projects and better presentations. Advertising is an extremely competitive business. Advertising creatives are continuously competing with their peers for promotion, vying with other agencies for accounts, or trying to vault themselves into a choice position in another agency. If an agency or individual makes speculative presentations, the arena becomes even more competitive. Non-competitors really can't make it in the advertising world.

After the presentations, the projects were turned in for a full written critique and grade. The final letter grade for the project was made up of the average of four evaluations: (1) the marketing as evidenced by the Creative Work Plan, (2) the concept, (3) the visualization and design, and (4) the copywriting. Students who had made superb presentations received a half grade higher than their average. If the students had missed any of their interim critique deadlines for thumbnails, roughs, etc., their grade was reduced one letter grade for each occurrence. Any project that was turned in on time could be redone for an improved grade. This encouraged the students to continue to refine and improve their work.

Evaluating creative output is subjective by nature. Advertising creativity, although marketing based, is an art and not a science. Success depends on a variety of human factors such as creativity, drive, competitiveness, off-the-wall wackiness, the willingness to take risks, plus good timing and a little luck. These aren't easily packaged into neat digestible education units that can be mass produced. That is one of the reasons why the advertising business is so exciting and why teaching advertising is a continual challenge.

I used a survey questionnaire that proved to be an effective tool for assessing the success of the project and benefits to the students. Ninety-four percent of the students understood the cause/effect relationship of research, problem definition, and setting clear objectives to the creation of effective advertising. I was particularly pleased with this result. Too often there has been an adversary relationship between research/marketing professionals and creatives because of a misguided notion that the former constrains the latter. This is extremely counter-productive in an industry that depends on teamwork. The students will benefit significantly from having developed an understanding and appreciation of their future agency co-workers.

All of the students who hadn't used a Creative Work Plan learned to develop and apply it to an advertising problem. Most of the students who were familiar with it became more comfortable or proficient in its use. In both 1987 and 1988, over 80 percent of the students thought that a Creative Work Plan enhanced versus inhibited creativity.

Typically, a successful creative must be somewhat a contradiction in terms: highly competitive yet able to function smoothly as a team member. Eighty-one percent of the students felt that the course put them in competition with their peers (final presentation) and also encouraged them to work as a team member (Creative Work Plan). In 1988 the latter rose to 92 percent.

Exactly how did their writing benefit from this writing-intensive experiment?

All but one of the students who wrote headlines for print ads (excluding those who created TV storyboards) believed they improved their headline copywriting. Every student understood the function of body copy, namely to amplify or explain the headline, develop the benefit promise and/or give the consumer the information needed or reasons why to buy. This was the first experience writing copy for print or broadcast advertising for most of the students. Each year only one of these students said they didn't learn how to write advertising copy. *All* of those who had previously written any copy for an ad or storyboard said that they improved their copywriting at least to some degree. This represents a ninety-six percent success rate.

All of the students in understood that writing advertising copy is very different from writing an English paper. In their own words:

> *In advertising, grammatical perfection is not always what is strived for. You must write the "spoken word" as it would be "heard."*

> *I have to pay double attention to my (target) audience.*
>
> *Advertising copy is "short and to the point."*
>
> *You have to stick to your objective.*

An equally significant result was more than 80 percent felt that the presentation of the creative may be as important as the creative itself. These students will either appreciate good Account Executives (who pitch the client) or develop the presentation skills needed to sell their own creative work to a client. This understanding of the value of a good presentation was a direct result of their experience in giving one. In 1987, 88 percent stated they benefitted from presenting their work orally to large group. Here are some of their comments:

> *This is a "must" feature. It teachers people to get up in front of an audience. After all, you have to sell yourselves and your ideas.*
>
> *It was like real life! It enhanced my ability to speak in front of a group.*
>
> *Giving an oral presentation of my ad gave me the feeling of how consumers might react to what I was trying to say.*
>
> *It gives me the opportunity to express the tone (excitement, humor and rationale, etc.) of my own work.*
>
> *I learned how important it is to entertain versus bore an audience.*

Advertising is a results-oriented business. It isn't creative if it doesn't sell. As an educator, I am most interested in the results, especially the creative output. From experience I know good creative output will result in jobs for graduating students. The student projects were incredible. They will be outstanding additions to the students' portfolios.

Traci Epp created a newspaper ad for Jimenez Restaurant and Bar to convince the target audience that Jimenez offers a relaxed atmosphere after a tough day at work. She combined a visual of Harold Lloyd hanging from the hand of a giant clock over a city street with a headline which read, "HANG ON TILL 5." She wrote this inspired body copy:

> *The gruelling hours, the headaches, the tension. You're a pressure cooker ready to explode. It's almost over. And you need to unwind. You need it bad! But now it's time. It's time to relax. Release the pressure. Soothe your nerves. Kick back. Think of that chilled Margarita. You need Jimenez, at 5 and after 5.*

Tamara Neff wrote a 30-second tv commercial and a 60-second radio spot for Sea World of San Antonio. It was directed to children 8-13 years old and featured an animated teenage cast of male killer whales and female dolphins (wearing bows and lipstick). They sing this jingle to the tune of "Summer Nights" from *Grease*:

> *Went to Sea World, had me a bla-ast.*
> *Such a great time, happened so fa-ast.*
> *So much fun's waiting for you.*
> *Hugged a seal, and kissed Shamu.*
> *A wella, wella, wella, huh! Tell me more,*
> *Tell me more! Did you get any fin?*

Tell me more, tell me more!
Like, does he have a twin? Aha, aha, aha.
Come to see great shows of all kinds.
Ohoo on a Se-ea World night.
A wella, wella, wella, huh! Tell me more.
Tell me more! A Did ya see the cool shark?
Tell me more, tell me more!
We could stay after dark. Aha, aha, aha.
Sea World days, drifting away
Ohoo-oo San Antonio ni-ights.
Tell me more, tell me more (jingle fades under as Shamu says:)
Sea World of San Antonio. See ya!

Teri Myers created a direct mail piece for SeaWorld. It was designed for children 8 to 13 and was mailed to them by name. Her research revealed that an appropriate mailing list really existed. The brightly colored and multi-folded ad contained a map of SeaWorld and pop-out sunglasses that sported Shamu on either side. The child had to wear the "Shamu Shades" to find a secret message on the map. The message was: "Wear your Shamu-Shades to Sea World between May 1988 and July 1988 and get in 1/2 price!"

Harte Hankes Graphics was so interested in Teri's design that they obtained rights from her to pitch SeaWorld speculatively. It's pretty amazing when student work is so good that it's used professionally. My response to Teri: "Welcome to the real world!"

Conclusion

The experiment was an unmitigated success.

The clip assignments were excellent writing-as-learning assignments. It appears that every little bit helps. The more students write, the greater chance they have to increase their fluency and develop their ability to break through writer's block. I observed that some students who had definite problems expressing themselves at the beginning of the semester were more fluent and more confident by the end of the semester.

It was evident from the results of the creative project that even the most poorly prepared and weak writers could learn to write adequate, if not inspired, body copy. Clearly, writing body copy can be successfully integrated into a freshman level course.

In the past, I have observed that many freshman students cannot distinguish initially between good and bad creative work. I always have assumed that the way to train them to recognize great creative is to work with them individually—critiquing their concept and headline freewriting. I have had a great deal of success with this. Yet, as state funds decrease and we are forced to deal with larger class sizes, I have been afraid that my success rate would diminish because I had less time for each student. Our class brainstorming sessions demonstrated the effectiveness of peer teaching. It is a viable teaching technique that I now employ. I definitely intend to put more emphasis on group dynamics and peer teaching and to experiment with them more fully in other classes.

I observed that it is never too early to employ real world processes like the Creative Work Plan. I believe this will give these students a real head start in sophomore courses and impart a better understanding of how creativity is generated and channeled in the workplace.

I realized that conventional grammar and sentence structure can't be applied literally to most advertising copy. Advertising copy often imitates conversational language. It's a communication shorthand. I have demonstrated that in my own writing and employed the knowledge in critiques of student work, yet I never *really* realized it. Eureka! Now I can explain that from the beginning. According to the 1987 survey *all* of them understood that by the end of the semester.

When the students were asked, on the exit survey I used, to choose between taking an English course or taking a writing-intensive advertising course, fifty percent would take the latter. Forty-four percent would take *both*. When you ask an either/or question and get a "both" answer it demonstrates a remarkable level of enthusiasm. I never would have anticipated that kind of a response before I got involved in writing across the curriculum. I suspect the students will be happier and more productive in their English classes because they understand the value of writing in the advertising world. Not only did they have less fear of writing after this course, they appear to now like writing and desire more opportunities to write.

The last survey question asked whether they would take an Advertising course if there was one in the Advertising Art curriculum. Ninety-six percent of the students said they would:

> *Yes!* (emphatically) *A thousand times yes!*
>
> *I believe a writing course, specifically for advertising is a great idea! It will help improve communication skills, help understand what it takes to enthrall and capture the viewer and develop copy properly. You should seriously consider offering such a class! I'd take it, along with many others! I knew we were missing something!*

Why Should You Get Involved in Writing across the Curriculum?

If you believe, as I do, that oral and written communication is essential to success in the business world, and you see how to apply writing-intensive principles to your discipline, then you have an opportunity to add significantly to your students' educational experience and personal growth.

Are you an idealist? Do you want to make a difference?

Can you imagine illiteracy as a maze of monolithic dominoes in the landscape of life, left largely intact by the high school system?

We stand around the periphery of the maze with our students. We are all a little overwhelmed by the height and breadth of what we face.

Can we make an impact?

Do you believe in the domino principle?

Embrace the principles of writing across the curriculum. Help your students to topple one monolith. Then, I believe we will watch them all tumble down like dominoes and our students run confidently into the breach.

Will you push from your side?

Editor's Commentary

Marsha Twomey became resolutely committed to writing across the curriculum when she learned that she could use her own professional expertise as a commercial artist and copywriter to develop writing assignments on which she could render an expert opinion. She, more than any English teacher, knew the requirements and nature of advertising language—its peculiar jargon and grammar, its tone and flavor. She realized that she could do her students an immense favor by passing this knowledge along to them and by developing writing assignments that would allow them to use their newfound language and become proficient in the language practices that dominate the professional world of business. Even the students who intended to specialize in graphic arts benefitted by the written work, because they came to see the work of their future colleagues in copywriting and editing from an insider's perspective. (Many editors and copywriters we know would be much happier if the artists they work with had received such training!)

A great strength of Marsha's course plan was the good conceptual fit between the two major assignments. In the clip assignment, the students wrote *about* advertisements in order to develop insights into the process of ad development; then, in the assignment to create their own ads, they put their insights to work. This is an excellent example of how writing-as-learning assignments can help to prepare students for world-of-work writing assignments.

Another great strength was the atmosphere of open discussion, criticism, and free communication of ideas that Marsha engendered in her class. This approach, which most students find engaging and enjoyable (though some find threatening), is very similar to Robert Reid's formatting of his laser technology classes, described in Chapter 15. We should note, in this regard, that this teaching technique is largely a matter of style. Both Marsha and Bob Reid are highly gregarious personalities and thus thrive in classes modelled on the free exchange of ideas. Other teachers may need to seek greater control of classroom activities.

Chapter 17

Venture Plans for Management Students

Lee Moore
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Lubbock, Texas

At South Plains College—Lubbock, many of our students are adults who are either trying to upgrade job skills in the hope of getting a promotion or have been out of the job market for extended periods of time. The average age of our students is almost 32 years. These older students often have the same inability to write as the younger "traditional" students, but their problem is compounded by fear concerning their ability to perform in the classroom after extended absence.

Over the past two years, there has been considerable discussion at our college about the need to incorporate writing into courses "across the curriculum" to overcome the weakness in writing skills observed in the majority of the students entering our doors. In the Marketing and Management area, where I teach, this is an easier task than in areas oriented toward mechanics rather than concepts.

One of the classes I teach at South Plains College is titled "Small Business Management." The purpose of the course is to give the students an introduction to the skills and tasks required in starting a new business "from scratch." Ideally, upon completion of the course, the student will have acquired a working knowledge of the steps necessary in an entrepreneurial venture.

In an effort to help students learn to approach a project in an orderly manner and express their ideas clearly, I borrowed from Olive D. Church's *Small Business Management and Entrepreneurship* the idea of having students develop their own plan for starting a business. I asked them to proceed as though they were developing a proposal for the lender from whom they would request the startup capital. My intent was to give a writing assignment which would constitute a major effort in total but which could be approached in small, bite-sized segments.

Goals and Objectives for the "Venture Plan"

The assignment was identified in the course syllabus simply as "venture plan" and was due in the next-to-last week of the semester. On the first day of class, as part of the course orientation discussion, I discussed the course objectives, including the goal of being able to talk coherently about the major considerations involved in starting and running a small business. As we discussed the course schedule, I explained that the various units of the course material would deal with different areas of concern for the entrepreneur who desired to start a business. In mentioning the "term project," I explained that, as the course progressed, I would expect the students to develop a venture plan for some real or mythical business as though they were the owner/operator. For example, in the second week of the semester the students would be asked to prepare, as one assignment, a description of the business they chose. This description would include a physical description, as well as industry characteristics, the competitive environment, location, and the student's reasons for choosing this particular business.

The various individual units which eventually would constitute the venture plan were each to be treated as separate writing projects, titled, typed, double-spaced as appropriate, and submitted in smooth form. The students would then compile all the parts, make changes as required by grading notes, and submit a final, clean copy of the proposal in the fourteenth week. The final projects were graded and handed back the last regular class period, and outstanding projects were singled out for compliments and discussion.

The objectives of this assignment were to enforce a certain ordered approach to study and application of the course material. In addition, the assignment would give them some practical experience in putting together the information necessary for establishing a new business venture.

The Assignment

Beginning with Chapter 4, *Creating a New Venture and Preparing a Business Plan*, you will be expected to use course material to put together a business plan (venture plan) for the business you choose to develop. As each unit is completed, I will expect you to submit the results of your planning efforts in that area, as it applies to "your business." Each of these units will be reviewed, and you may be asked to revise each unit. Each unit submitted will contribute toward the grade received for the total project.

To aid in development of your business plan, the following outline is suggested. The major headings roughly correspond to the order in which course material will be presented. You may deviate from this particular format if you wish, and you may add items not covered in this outline or delete items not applicable to your project.

Outline for Preparing a Business Plan

I. INTRODUCTION
  A. General statement of purpose and objectives
  B. Overview of the industry

II. PRODUCTS/SERVICES
  A. Description
  B. Proprietary features
  C. Patent or copyright protection
  D. Quality level
  E. Breadth of product line

III. MARKET RESEARCH
  A. Description of market to be served
  B. Market size and segments
  C. Market trends
  D. Customers—type and locations
  E. Competition—strengths and weaknesses
  F. Sales forecast

IV. MARKETING PLAN
  A. Overall marketing strategy
  B. Channels of distribution
  C. Personal selling

- D. Advertising and promotion
- E. Pricing
- F. Service and warranty policies

V. OPERATIONS
- A. Location
- B. Facilities
- C. Raw materials
- D. Inventory control
- E. Quality control
- F. Production control
- G. Staffing
- H. Research and development

VI. ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT
- A. Legal form of organization
- B. Managerial organization—roles and relationships
- C. Key management personnel
- D. Management compensation and ownership
- E. Board of directors
- F. Outside professional services

VII. FINANCIAL PLAN
- A. Initial financial requirements
- B. Profit-and-loss forecast
- C. Cash-flow forecast
- D. Break-even analysis
- E. Projected source of funds
- F. Projected balance sheet
- G. Ownership interests
- H. Risks and contingency plans

In preparing each plan unit, keep in mind that you are trying to impress a venture capitalist with your ideas and your plans. What you submit should be professional in appearance, typed, double-spaced, and in the proper report or proposal format. To give you some idea of what is expected, several examples of good projects are available for your examination.

Potential Problems and Effective Solutions

Among our students, two major writing problems stand out. The first is that many students have little knowledge of spelling, grammar, sentence structure, and paragraph development. As a result, many students are terrified of any situation in which they are required to put their thoughts on paper. A second problem occurs with the students who simply cannot get used to the idea of putting out the amount of effort required to plan and produce a project of this type. Many students have been allowed to progress through high school without ever really performing on a project of this nature. Many of them have absolutely no idea even how to begin with the planning and development of the ideas necessary for this assignment. Further, many of them appear unwilling to learn. Motivating these students is a major challenge with this type of assignment.

After my initial horror, I have decided that I cannot correct the first problem in my course. That is not my mission. I believe the major contribution this type of assignment can make is to point out graphically to students where their weaknesses are and encourage them to seek the remedial help they need. By praising good projects and explaining why and how these projects are outstanding, I reward the efforts of the students submitting these projects. Further, the other students can compare their efforts to the outstanding work of peers, and this can be very valuable for future efforts. Care must be taken, however, not to embarrass any student whose efforts were less than the best. A positive, reinforcing attitude is extremely important.

To overcome the second problem I tried to communicate directly with each student the practical applications of the lessons learned from this project. I also tried to point out, positively but forcefully, areas where obviously little effort had been expended. I tried to convey to the students that I know they are capable of better work and to create some desire in them to reach their potential. To do this, it seems necessary to make the rewards tangible, since many people in today's world seem unmotivated by anything intangible. Thus, I remind the students of the immediate, tangible rewards of their efforts: grades.

Benefits of the "Venture Plan" Project

I believe most of my students benefitted from the project in several ways. First, by breaking the rather imposing project down into several smaller segments, the students got a close look at many important questions which must be answered by aspiring entrepreneurs. At the same time, the students were forced to do at least minimal research directed toward answering these questions. Not only was the research important for the information gained, but the process of doing the research provided some valuable opportunities for learning. Second, the students were forced to think about expressing some particular ideas in an orderly, informative manner. The requirement that they approach this project as though they were addressing their communication to a prospective lender or venture capitalist injected a practical note with inescapable impact. They had to answer the question: "What does the lender want to know?" Further, the students were required to think about how to present their ideas as a professional with the initiative and ingenuity to succeed in the real business world. Finally, the students benefitted from deciding about their choice of a business enterprise. Some students who had not previously given much thought to their career options were forced to come to grips with the fact that to achieve success in life, conscious, systematic decisions are better than "going with the flow."

Conclusion

Judging from the results of the first attempt, I think this particular project is of significant value in this type of course. The practical experience involved helps considerably to give the students a real-world view of major course concepts and also provides a means of working on communication skills within the context of the course.

Editor's Commentary

Teachers in areas like business learn quickly, as they begin to have their students do writing assignments, that World-of-Work writing can fulfill the cognitive goals of Writing-as-Learning if the assignments are properly managed.

Lee Moore's assignment required, for example, that the students relate their own experiences to the kinds of analysis they were asked to include in their Business Plans. This sort of work replaces the writing of personal responses in journals with a more structured form of personal response, a kind which many practically minded vocational-technical students find more rewarding than the unstructured "free-writing" advocated by many writing across the curriculum programs. The personality of the teacher is also involved here. Some prefer a more controlled "writing environment." They prefer to deal with forms of writing they are familiar with from the world of work.

But Lee's writing assignment departs from traditional "term papers" not only in his use of a World-of-Work kind of writing, but also in the way he broke the assignment down into manageable "chunks," so that his students, once they have overcome their initial fear of the massive Business Plan, realize that writing one step at a time enables them to deal with the paper as a series of small assignments. Too often, we give long assignments and leave students to their own devices in preparing it. They wait until the night before it is due and are overwhelmed by the size of the task before them. What they turn in, under these conditions, is bound to be poor in quality and depressing or maddening for the teacher who must read and grade the work.

Chapter 18

Writing for the Real World: A Resume Writing Course for Vocational-Technical Students

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For the Fall 1987 semester, at the impetus of a Texas Education Association dictum that vocational-technical students have more non-technical (i.e., academic) courses in their curriculum, a one-hour course in resume writing and job search skills was implemented into the vocational-technical curriculum at Western Texas College, with the idea in mind to provide these particular students with another opportunity to develop and/or practice writing skills in a relevant, "real-world writing" situation. The administration remembered my efforts in the technical writing core, and I was "volunteered" to teach the class.

The resume writing class I developed consisted entirely of diesel mechanics, so, not knowing exactly their writing skills or ability level and having been told to keep the class "pretty basic," I adapted to their interests the materials I had already collected for use by the academic technical writing course. As the main text for the course, I used a packet of materials published in 1987 by South-Western Publishing Company entitled *Getting a Job: Process Kit* by Robert Zedlitz. I also had access to another resource, *Resume* by Ken Fulkerson and Harry Richter, published by McGraw-Hill, Inc. in 1985, a computer program to create a reproducible resume and designed for use on the Apple II, TRS-80, and IBM-PC computers.

Assignments

The assignments for the course are divided into ten lessons, beginning with a letter of introduction and ending with a course evaluation. In between are eight steps or stages in the job search process. The lessons are writing-intensive, requiring students to produce a number of writings which could be actually used in a job search, including an application form, two kinds of resumes, a cover letter, a post-interview letter, a resignation letter, and a letter of recommendation. Some of the lessons emphasize oral communication skills as well, with students participating in both a mock job interview and a mock exit interview. Most of the assignments were revised at least two and often more times before being typed for the final version. Often, an assignment was begun in class, finished at home, brought to the next class, edited by peers in class, and revised both in class and at home, before the final typed product would be completed and turned in for a grade.

Lesson 1—Letter of Introduction

Students are asked to write a letter introducing themselves to their instructors and answering a few questions about themselves. This information helps the instructor not only become better acquainted with each student but also know something about each student's writing ability, background in writing, and written communication deficiencies or needs that the course can meet.

Lesson 2—Application Form

The purpose of this lesson is to give students practice in filling out an application form. It especially emphasizes what information is needed to complete a typical application form and what employers look for in an application form (or, hints on successfully completing an application form). The students are presented with the following assignment:

> You have been given a sample completed employment application form, pages 14-15 in your Instructions Booklet. First, read the sample form; then, obtain the information about yourself necessary to completing employment application forms on pages 7-12 in your Supplies Booklet. Before completing the employment application forms in this assignment, determine what job title you are seeking. The International Corporation and Dayton National Corporation are very large business organizations. They have many business opportunities, including the job you want. Make up a job title, if necessary. Then proceed to fill in completely the two blank job application forms given you as part of this assignment: one for The International Corporation, and one for Dayton National Corporation. When you have completed these two forms, write the answers to the questions on page ___ of this assignment and turn it in with the completed application forms.

Students are given two typical but very differently arranged application forms to fill in and are asked after completing them to write a short discussion in which they compare the two application forms noting the similarities, differences, and generally what kind of information is asked for in a typical application form.

Lesson 3—Finding Job Leads

This lesson does not directly involve writing skills as it suggests a process to follow to find job leads. The student is encouraged to think actively about where he can find job leads and is motivated to actually make contact with a number of these leads. Oral communications skills are involved in making these contacts by phone or in person.

Lesson 4—Resumes

By the end of this lesson each student will have produced both a general and a specific resume and will know in which job search situation each type of resume is appropriate. The students must complete the following assignment:

Using the practice resume sheets given, fill in the information asked for. Note that one practice sheet is for a general resume and one is for a specific resume. After you have filled in the practice sheets, go over them again making any corrections necessary. When the practice resumes are completed to your satisfaction, either type or have someone else type several copies of each resume in the style shown in the sample resumes given. You will then be ready to photocopy them or have them professionally reproduced at a copy center.

Students work a computer program which consists of completing a personal information inventory, designing a resume from that inventory, and printing a reproducible resume. This particular software program allows the students flexibility in designing the order of the components on their resumes so that they can produce either type of resume suitable for use in applying for any job opening, inquiring about a job opening, and/or obtaining an interview.

Lesson 5—Cover Letter

This assignment allows the student to produce a cover letter (letter of application) to accompany his resume. The students are given the following assignment:

You have been given two sample cover letters. Notice that each sample letter does the following things:

a. states the purpose of the letter

b. states the qualifications of the applicant or the reasons why the person writing the letter should be interviewed for the job

c. requests an interview

For this assignment, you will need a newspaper ad (or an ad from a trade magazine or some other appropriate source) for a job for which you would like to apply. If you cannot find a suitable ad, choose one of the ads given in the handout, and assume that you have the necessary qualifications for the job. Using the sample cover letters as a guide, write your own cover letter and proofread it. When you have made any necessary changes to your rough draft, type (or have someone type for you) the final copy of the cover letter. Be sure to use the same kind of paper you used for your resume.

Lessons 6 and 7—The Interview

These two lessons do not involve writing skills directly but instead emphasize oral communications skills and personal preparation necessary to having an effective job interview.

Lessons 8 and 9—After the Interview

The first of these two lessons involves writing a post-interview letter and following up a job interview:

A sample post-interview letter is shown on page 32 of your Instructions Booklet. Read it carefully and use it as a sample when you write a post-interview letter using the page provided in your Supplies Booklet. You may use Case I on page 31 of your Instructions Booklet if you wish, or you may make up a job of your own (or use an actual job interview).

Lesson 8 also involves oral communications skills helpful to exit interviews and how to handle being laid off and being fired in future job interviews. Lesson 9 requires the student to write a letter of resignation and a letter of reference:

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1. A sample of a good resignation letter is shown on page 35 of your Instructions Booklet. Using this letter as a guide, write your own resignation letter on the page provided in your Supplies Booklet.
2. A sample reference letter is shown on page 37 of your Instructions Booklet. Using this letter as a guide, write yourself a reference letter on the page provided in your Supplies Booklet. Then type or have someone type for you a final copy of this letter to turn in.

Part of this lesson includes a mock job exit interview and a portion of a job interview in which the interviewer asks the interviewee if he or she has ever been fired or laid off, both conducted by peers in the class, to give the student practice in giving an effective response to this question in a pressure situation (like a job interview).

Lesson 10—Course Evaluations

This final lesson asks the student to write a memo in which he or she evaluates the course. Each student is given a list of items to consider and is encouraged to be honest and frank in his evaluation of his own performance in meeting the course objectives and the value of these assignments to him, especially as they apply to his own "real world" job search.

Conclusion

At the end of the semester I had mixed feelings about the success of the course. Earlier in the report I mentioned that I had been told by the administration to keep the course "pretty basic," so I chose the process kit, a new text for me, partly out of this need. The material contained in the process kit is indeed "pretty basic," even for vocational-technical students at a rural community college. (I found out after adopting these materials that South-Western markets them primarily for high school-level classes.) Despite this drawback, however, the material contained in the process kit is easy to understand and proceeds in a logical order, and it offers me the additional advantage of presenting in one relatively inexpensive place examples similar to nearly everything I normally use in discussing the employment process from a usually much more expensive hardback book.

These are the things that worked in the course (or that I liked and wouldn't change if I taught it again):

- Keep the organization, with the eight steps as outlined in the process kit.

- Keep the assignments as they are; continue the writing-intensive and process-oriented nature of the assignments, as the course does provide additional practice in writing for the real world, and students can almost never get too much practice in communicating in writing.

- Continue requiring a reproducible resume from each student in the course. Over the years, I have concluded, from my observations and feedback from students, that this one assignment is more helpful to more students in more ways than just about any other in their college careers.

My major disappointments in the course involved the limitations of the computer program I used. Using the computer software program for producing a resume caused a lot of problems. From the students' standpoint, the amount of time required to complete the entire program varied, depending on the student's previous computer skills, from an average of four to seven hours. In all the classes in which I have used the program, students have tried to bypass some necessary steps in the sequence of the program which results in the program "locking down" or not printing the information it contains. Also, because it is copy protected, students cannot continually update for a lifetime resume; copies cost $25 each. Neither can the student transfer the information contained on the disk to his own data disk, but each student has to complete his entire resume on the disk and print out a hard copy before another student can use the disk. (Entering new information on the disk replaces the old information it contains.)

I am currently looking for a software program I like better than the McGraw-Hill program. If I do not find one, I will recommend that the college purchase enough copies of the program so that each student may have a copy to work on for this class and then erase the information to insure his or her privacy.

Editor's Commentary

Janet Halbert was one of the few members of our project who experimented with computer-assisted writing assignments, and her results were mixed. As Thomas Barker notes in our chapter on computer-assisted writing, many teachers will prefer to depend on simple word-processing rather than elaborate packaged programs such as the one Janet used. Using plain word processors, teachers can create customized templates for resumes or any other kind of world-of-work writing the students need practice in. Despite its problems, however, the program Janet used did provide a structure that was congenial with the lessons for the course, and many students obviously benefitted from using the computer.

The greatest strength of the job-seeking skills course that Janet designed was the rational organization of the course, which was based on a real-world model; that is, the sequence of the assignments followed a chronology that mimics the sequence of writings in the world of work. Vocational-technical teachers often have opportunities to structure their courses in this way. Charles Wilson, one of our participants from South Plains College at Lubbock whose untimely death prevented him from writing a chapter for this guide, had his electronics students write world-of-work documents at every stage of a design project, beginning with an engineering notebook and progressing on to a progress report and a final project report submitted in two drafts.

As Janet observed, students respond eagerly to writing assignments which have tangible applications in their vocations. We should take advantage of this built-in motivator in preparing writing assignments and course plans.

Chapter 19

(W)rites of Passage: Writing in the Public Administrative Careers Program

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San Antonio, Texas

The Public Administrative Careers program at San Antonio College focuses on those fundamental skills, competencies, and attitudes students need to function effectively in public-sector employment settings. The program emphasizes the interrelated concepts of public management, including administrative leadership, human resource management, labor relations, public relations, ethics, finance, intergovernmental relations, and communications.

San Antonio College (SAC) subscribes to an open-door admissions policy. The students in my classes, therefore, represent a cross section of the population in San Antonio and Bexar County. The academic preparation and needs of these students are equally diverse. These students are required, however, to have successfully completed at least one semester of college-level, freshman English (English 1301) before enrolling in writing-intensive courses. With very few exceptions, these students are pursuing a course of study leading to the one- or two-year degree in criminal justice, fire science, postal services administration, or public administrative careers.

About the Assignments

Background

San Antonio College faculty involved in developing and teaching writing-intensive courses are responding to the institution's Competency Program. The essence of SAC's Competency Program addresses the importance for the students to demonstrate basic competencies in reading, writing, speaking, and critical thinking by the time they complete their lower division college work.

According to the recommendations of the Committee on Competencies as approved by the Council on Academic Affairs of San Antonio College:

> *During their college years students should not only acquire a large body of knowledge but the ability to use that knowledge for specific purposes. They should become better able to express and exchange ideas and to find answers to personal and professional problems. The Competency Program is designed to help students handle and apply knowledge in effective ways. The Program will enable students to refine their skills in expository writing, quantitative reasoning, and oral communication in order that they may more fully participate in the academic programs and career opportunities available to them.*
>
> —*A Handbook of Regulations and Information*
> San Antonio College, June 1987, p. 9.

From our Committee on Competencies also comes the working definition of our institution's writing-intensive courses.

> *A Writing-Intensive (WI) course is any course in which a student must write a minimum of 2,000 words comprising at least 60% of a student's grade. In addition to the customary content of the course, a writing-intensive course must focus on the following competencies in writing assignments:*
>
> *a. To write an essay with unity, a controlling purpose, and effective examples, illustrations, and other supporting details.*
>
> *b. To adapt organization, style, and tone to various audiences, purposes, and content.*
>
> *c. To synthesize from disorganized data an organization that effectively communicates that data to a given audience.*
>
> *d. To use standard English grammatically, clearly, precisely, and economically.*
>
> *e. To control processes for selecting reasonable topics, developing ideas and arguments, researching information on chosen topics efficiently, drafting, revising, rewriting, and editing.*
>
> *f. To use writing to solve problems and to explore knowledge in all disciplines.*
>
> *g. To write with syntactic maturity—to use various sentence structures with ease and grace.*
>
> *h. To assess writing, their own and others, both student and professional, and to analyze writings for various purposes.*
>
> —*A Handbook of Regulations and Information.*
> San Antonio College, June 1987, p. 12.

Helpful Hints

Now that I have summarized some of the principles that underlie the development and organization of our writing-intensive classes, I will share with you some basic points that have helped me (a non-grammarian) formulate and teach effective written communication assignments. These points are uniform requirements for effective writing, regardless of the course or the discipline.

My students need to be convinced of the value of effective written communication, so I spend as much time as necessary talking to them about the *purpose* of writing and about their *audience*. The instructions that accompany their writing assignments reinforce these points. Do not take it for granted that your students have a good grasp of purpose, audience, organization, style, and tone. As instructors, for example, we often fabricate an "audience" for our students. Your students and mine, however, generally have one conception of audience: the teacher.

Many of you may feel that breaking the class into small groups is asking for trouble, inviting chaos. I have found, however, that small groups can serve very important purposes. Peer editing, for example, lends itself well for small group work—students helping students. I state, at the first class meeting, that part of the course grade depends upon active participation and how helpful they are to their classmates throughout the course.

If there is a secret to effective writing, I am convinced it lies in revising: producing a second, third, fourth, and fifth draft. My students don't like to prepare several drafts. They grumble, but students have and will continue to complain at the pain of education. I tell my students that revising means re-seeing. I ask them to employ a cooling-off period before writing. Quite often my students find that a new day brings a new view of their work. You may find, however, that your students need help in editing their own work. Providing them with a checklist of what to look for may help. I ask my students to ask themselves the following:

1. What is the thesis of my report? (Pay special attention to the topic sentence and the first and last paragraph).

2. Is the organization of my report logical? Are my transitions smooth? What about paragraph unity and coherence—are they tight? Does the body of my report fulfill the reader's expectation as set forth in the topic sentence and introductory paragraph?

3. Is the style and tone appropriate for the audience—real or fabricated? Is my writing clear, concise, and cogent?

4. Is my report grammatically and mechanically sound? (Pay close attention to subject-verb agreements, sentence fragments, run-on sentences, and punctuation).

I know what you are thinking, but revision need not mean you will have more papers to read and grade. Remember the small-group and peer-editing strategies? Revision provides an excellent opportunity to employ both strategies. Peer editing, for example, can be used in or out of class. With a little in-class training and a checklist your students can become effective peer editors.

Finally, you will need to grade your students' papers. If you and your students have employed strategies such as self-editing, small-groups discussions, and peer revisions, your grading task shouldn't be that difficult. To make your task easier, you may want to develop a key at the time you are preparing the writing assignment(s) in much the same way you would prepare a key for the objective exam.

My students know that I will grade their work for both content and errors of organization, grammar, punctuation, and spelling. My students also know, however, that I put more emphasis on what they say and how they say it than on their mastery of grammar and mechanics. I do not mean to suggest that grammar and mechanics are inconsequential. Obviously, they are important, but I am more concerned with students viewing themselves as communicators who understand that effective written communication is a process not a product. I have found that when students see themselves as communicators, they are more inclined to take the time and put forth the effort required to express their ideas clearly, concisely, and correctly.

Getting Started

The first class meeting is critical for the success of your writing-intensive course. In fact, I use a special checklist just for the first class session to help me accomplish all the administrative tasks and to set the stage. Here is a sample of the items found on my checklist for the first class meeting.

1. Welcome
2. Introduction (myself and students)
3. Course Syllabus (thorough review)
4. Writing Exercise (students write down course goals/expectations)
5. Introduction of topic/subject (time permitting)
6. Announcements (if applicable)
7. Call class roster
8. Summarize course goals, objectives, requirements, and evaluation criteria (final grade determination)
9. Reading/writing assignment for next meeting.

As you read the writing assignments I use in some of my classes, you will note that one or more subject-related objectives are stated in the introduction of each assignment. Most of these assignments also ask students to show me that they know how to define issues, research and analyze information, synthesize information, support a thesis, and generate sound conclusions. Furthermore, the assignments remind students that they need to consider the audience and purpose of their communication, and how these items affect the organization, style, tone, grammar, and mechanics of their document(s).

While I do not assign any major writing project(s) during the first four to six weeks of the semester, I start talking to my students about possible assignments very early in the semester. Well before the date for the assignment, I either hand out a list of potential topics or ask the students to submit their suggestions concerning subjects I have identifies for them. In most cases, the students end up selecting topics from the list I have prepared for them.

On the day I hand out the assignment, I follow a routine that has proven very helpful to my students and me. Here is a list of the major steps I use:

1. Distribution (The assignment is issued to students at start of class meeting.)

2. Student review (Students are allowed 2 to 3 minutes to acquaint themselves with the assignment.)

3. Instructor review (I lead the students through a thorough review of the assignment and allow plenty of time for questions and answers.)

4. Informal Plan (Students are asked to prepare an informal plan indicating the major steps they will use to complete the assignment. These informal plans are due at the following class session.)

5. Review of Plans (Students are divided into small groups and asked to share their plans with each other—the task is to select the best plan and share it with the other groups.)

6. Revise, rewrite, and re-edit.

Sample Writing-Intensive Assignments

This section consists of four sample writing assignments I use in my classes. Each assignment consists of three parts: (1) general instructions and rationale for the assignment, (2) specifications for the paper, (3) and the writing assignment itself.

The first assignment is from the class Introduction to Public Administration.

The founders of public administration have both similarities and differences as reflected through their contributions to this field of study. A fundamental course goal is to be able to identify these contributions and describe their similarities and differences. This assignment will help you achieve this course goal as well as to familiarize you with key research procedures such as selecting sources and information, making inferences, and choosing examples to support your conclusions. These skills, along with the opportunity to practice effective writing techniques dealing with the concept of audience, purpose as well as organization, tone, style, grammar, punctuation, and spelling, are the focus of this exercise.

Specifications

1. Audience: Instructor
2. Length: 2-3 pages typed (double-spaced)
3. Resources: Assigned readings and related articles in recent and current issues of professional journals such as *Public Administration Review*, *Public Management*, and encyclopedias. Library guides, free for the taking, are located on the bulletin board to the right of the Library Reserve Desk in the main lobby of the Moody Learning Center; they include, among others, "Using a Library Search Strategy," "Finding Books," and "Finding Articles in Periodicals."
4. Due Date:

Writing Assignment

After completing the assigned readings and reviewing related articles (as noted on #3. Resources), you will be more familiar with the major founders of public administration. In this paper, identify at least three figures associated with the development of public administration and explain how they influenced (positively or negatively) the state of public/urban management, as we know it today. Make sure that I approve of your selections. Cite specific contributions to illustrate your findings.

The second assignment is from the course Administrative Techniques in Communication.

A fundamental course goal is to help you master an assortment of strategies needed for achieving control of various reporting tasks. This assignment will help you achieve this goal in several ways. First, it will reinforce the principles associated with purpose and audience analysis. Second, it will improve your note-taking and study skills. Third, it will give you more practice in preparing informative paragraphs that are unified and coherent. Finally, it will teach you to extract essential messages from longer pieces and to communicate the essential messages intact.

You are reminded that effective written communication also includes consideration for the organization, tone, styles, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

Specifications

1.	Audience:	Classmates
2.	Length:	1-2 pages typed (double-spaced)
3.	Resources:	Articles from professional/technical journals on reserve (under my name) at the Moody Learning Center.
4.	Due Date:	

Writing Assignment

Prepare two summaries and corresponding abstracts of two articles from two different professional or technical journals on reserve at the Moody Learning Center (library). Be sure to read and/or review Chapter 6 (pp. 98-110) of your textbook before starting on this assignment. Follow the guidelines and techniques concerning the preparation of summaries and abstracts in completing this writing assignment.

The third assignment is also from the course Administrative Techniques in Communications.

Among the major course objectives is to learn to recognize the various writing situations and prepare appropriate responses. This assignment will help you accomplish this major objective in three ways. First, it will reinforce your research skills as you identify the organization(s) you choose to contact. Second, you will have the opportunity to sharpen your written communication skills as you prepare a letter of inquiry to the organization(s) you plan to contact. Third, it will acquaint you with a basic means of written communication (the memorandum) between two persons—or between individuals and groups—in an organization. You are reminded that effective written communication includes consideration for the audience, and purpose, as well as organization, tone, style, grammar, and spelling.

Specifications

1. Audience: Employer
2. Length: 4-5 pages typed (double-spaced)
3. Resources: *Encyclopedia of Associations*, 21st ed., 1987 (Gale Research Company, Book Tower, Detroit, MI 48226) and *The Municipal Year Book*, 1987 (International City Management Association, 1120 G Street, N.W. Washington, D.C. 2005)
   Library guides, free for the taking, are located on the bulletin board to the right of the Library Reserve Desk in the main lobby of the Moody Learning Center; they include, among others, "Using a Library Search Strategy," "Finding Background Information," "Finding Books," and "Finding Articles in Periodicals."
4. Due Date:

Writing Assignment

Assume that you are a recent hire with IXL and Associates, a consultant firm that contracts with large municipalities. You believe the firm's Executive Director should approve your request to join one professional association such as the National League of Cities, attend a national/state convention, and subscribe to two journals. Convince the Executive Director why he/she should approve your request. Prepare a typed memorandum (no longer than 5 pages) providing the following information.

I. Professional Organization/Association
  - brief description/history
  - purpose
  - headquarters, state and local chapter
  - leadership/offices
  - services offered
  - dues (membership)
  - recent/next convention
  - convention topics/issues
  - budget $ __________

II. Journals
  - select two
  - bibliographic citation
  - editorial purpose
  - for each journal examine three volumes and prepare a brief thematic review of each journal
  - budget $ __________

The fourth assignment is from the course Introduction to Public Administration.

A major course objective is to learn to differentiate among the various forms of municipal government in the local area (Bexar county) and to relate them to current issues and problems. This assignment will help you achieve this course objective as well as to familiarize you with important research skills such as selecting sources and information, making inferences, defining thesis, and choosing data to support your thesis or position. These skills, along with the opportunity to practice effective written communications techniques dealing with the concept of audience, purpose, as well as organization, tone, style, grammar, and spelling, are the focus of this exercise.

Specifications

1. Audience: Instructor
2. Style Manual: *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 5th ed. (Kate L. Turabian). Use the parenthetical documentation style rather than footnotes or endnotes.
3. Length: 7-8 pages typed (double-spaced), as prescribed by Turabian.
4. Resources: Library guides, free for the taking, are located on the bulletin board to the right of the Library Reserve Desk in the main lobby of the Moody Learning Center; they include, among others, "Using a Library Search Strategy," "Finding Books," and "Finding Articles in Periodicals."
5. Due Date:

Writing Assignment

Consider the following statement: "Although variations of each form of municipal government (mayor-council, commission, and council-manager) are seen, the council-manager form is touted as the *best* approach to promote the effective and efficient delivery of municipal services." Take a position on this issue and defend it.

This position paper must include discussion of the decline of central cities, the concomitant escalating growth of suburban areas, decreasing tax base, and increased demands on resources and services. Try to include some information about the key principles of public administration that support your position.

Conclusion

If your writing-intensive assignments are well crafted and designed to support the course objectives, your problems will be few. However, there are these potential shortcomings:

1. Over-emphasizing the product rather than the process;
2. Preoccupation with grammatical and mechanical errors;

3. Dictating formats and models; and

4. Assuming students know more than they do about writing—some of them need a lot of help.

Like many of my colleagues working with writing-intensive courses at San Antonio College, I believe the program has great potential. I say this because of the manner in which this writing-intensive program emphasizes the value of writing as a basic method of learning. Furthermore, the writing-intensive program is building bridges, within and between departments at SAC, and faculty are responding with a renewed sense of purpose and community.

Ceremonies that mark key stages in the life of an individual (baptism/puberty, marriage, initiation) are often referred to as rites of passage. As an individual moves from one stage to another (single to married person/marriage rites) specific rites are undertaken to accomplish the moves. Arnold Van Gennep, who developed the rites of passage concept, tells us that this concept can be divided into three significant stages: separation, transition, and incorporation. In a given rite of passage, consequently, there are behaviors that remove a person from a previous position (separation), guide that person through a period in which the previous status is changed (transition), and finally reintegrate that person into a new status (incorporation).

While I may not transform my students into expert communicators and writers in one short semester, I see them gaining confidence in those roles. As they come to grips with significance and relevance of the communication process in their lives, they realize the importances of expressing their ideas in ways that can be easily understood by others. Bringing students to this stage of understanding, however, requires tremendous teamwork and dedication on the part of the students and teachers. If I can help my students understand how they can work toward writing to learn, then I have done my part in guiding them through their (w)rites of passage.

Editor's Commentary

With great ingenuity, Lusiano Soliz confronts the problem of audience in student writing. As he notes, no matter what your assignment says about the topic, your students generally have one audience in mind: you the teacher. It is crucial in teaching pre-professional students, however, that we help them move beyond this narrow view of audience and show them how to write for a variety of audiences.

Lusiano accomplishes this objective by letting the students begin by writing for the audience that seems most natural to them—the teacher. Then, he widens the circle to an audience of classmates. By this time in the semester, the students are quite familiar with this audience since they engage frequently in the process of peer review (see Chapter 2 for a further discussion of how to do peer review in your classes). In the next assignment, Lusiano moves his students into the world of work and has them write for a prospective employer. This a major step in the use of writing to accomplish professional goals. Finally, the course plan calls for a return to writing for the teacher, which is a good move for several reasons, the most important being that it implicitly demonstrates the relation between writing for employers and the best writing for teachers: the purpose is not to impress the reader, but to give the needed information in such a way that the writer is judged favorably and rewarded for his or her effort.

Part Five

Writing Assignments and Course Plans

Chapter 20

One Step at a Time: Composition in the Typing Class

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In the fall of 1986 I was fortunate to participate in El Paso Community College's semester-long Writing across the Curriculum (WAC) seminar. Once a week WAC participants got together to discuss WAC philosophy and research and to share ideas and teaching experiences in which we had experimented with WAC methodology.

I chose Typewriting I as a logical point to begin to incorporate WAC assignments to support the course objectives. This course begins to prepare students at El Paso Community College for the demands of the work place by enabling them to use computer and other typewriter-like keyboards by touch with a high degree of accuracy. Students must be able to type a minimum of two 3-minute timed writings with no more than one error per writing. Typewriting I is a three-credit course with a required two-hour lab. Students taking the class come from all disciplines: some come because their degree plans require taking the course as the keyboarding skill will be needed in their chosen career; others come because they want or need to acquire the skill for personal use; many are students with majors in secretarial science or information processing whose careers will require expertise in keyboarding as a foundation for numerous job functions; many have bilingual backgrounds.

A secondary goal is to develop basic composing-at-the-keyboard skills. The fact that an individual can sit down at the computer and input a simple message or an elaborate report, complete with color graphics and print enhancements, that is instantaneously received thousands of miles away is indicative of the communications opportunities available today through this technology. As a result, being able to input by touch and to create at the keyboard are skills that will be of value to most people going into the job market.

When I learned through our WAC seminars that short writing exercises are very effective, I decided to implement writing-intensive methodology through composing exercises similar to those recommended in a 1986 Mountain-Plains monograph entitled *Composition at the Keyboard* (Service Bulletin No. 28, 1986). The writing component in the course began with extremely simple one-word responses during the second week of class and ended with short paragraph compositions by the end of the semester.

Step One: From Simple Dictation to Single-Word Responses

It is essential that students learn good keyboarding technique from the beginning and that they be assigned exercises that continually reinforce that learning as they move from one level of mastery to the next.

Their initial task is to learn the alphabetic keyboard. Once students learn enough letters to be able to type entire words, I dictate three or four *familiar words*—words that they have typed from textbook lessons. They type these words without looking at copy; if they cannot remember the location of a key, they look at the key location wall chart or the book graphic. This is a small first step toward their being able to create something without reading from copy. Yet the principal objective at this stage is to reinforce the key locations that they have learned.

A few days later I dictate questions, and the students type *single-word responses*, words that they have encountered in *previous lessons*. The objective is still reinforcement of key location; students can refer to the charts if they forget the key locations.

About the fourth week, we move to single-word responses to unfamiliar material, such as, "The opposite of east is ________" and "What is your favorite dessert?" Suddenly a new cognitive level has been added. In this apparently simple exercise, students must now come up with their own response in addition to recalling where each key is and what finger to use. As one student put it, ". . . After awhile it tends to get fairly easy typing from the book. Yet, typing from your head is a whole different story. It [creating at the keyboard] helps with the coordination of your mind and hands."

Coming up with what to say and how to execute the strokes takes a tremendous amount of concentration at this point in students' development. Helping them develop their powers of concentration is important because lack of concentration is the cause of most keyboarding errors.

I use writing exercises as one of several methods of developing concentration. Yet while we ultimately expect the high degree of accuracy that comes from concentration and the use of proper technique, accuracy is not an issue at this point. Students are instructed to ignore their errors in these initial exercises which, incidentally, are not collected.

Step Two:
Completing Sentences with Composed Phrases

In about the fifth week, I ask students to fold paper in half, insert it in the typewriter, and complete the sentence beginnings I display on a transparency. This marks *another level of development* by moving from single-word responses to *phrase responses*. This exercise is also different from previous exercises in that students create a *rough draft*, edit the rough draft with simple *editing symbols*, and attempt to type a *final copy* with a fair amount of accuracy. Here is what they see on the transparency:

I wish I had a . . .

I like typing because . . .

Our family likes to . . ..

I think that students . . .

Weekends . . .

I would like to . . .

Students are told to type the sentence beginning and add their own ending. They are not to be concerned about making errors because it is a rough draft. I emphasize that errors are acceptable in a rough draft. If they make errors of any kind, they are to space once and type the correct word or add the correct word later with pencil. They are given about five minutes to type the draft.

Then we discuss the following editing symbols:

PROOFREADING SYMBOLS

quickly
Go ^ To = INSERT
~~Time~~ = DELETE (TAKE OUT)
Tahn = TRANSPOSE (REVERSE)
march = CAPITALIZE
≡
(lc) You ~~B~~uy = MAKE LOWER CASE (SMALL LETTER)
Meet#Me = ADD A SPACE

After correcting their draft with pencil, using the above symbols, they type a final copy from the rough draft, trying to be as accurate as possible. They hand in both the original and final copies.

As with the previous exercises, students like this task and want to spend more time on it. They enjoy the class interaction, and the exercises seem to appeal to their urge to create. One person wrote at the end of the term about this desire to create:

> *I like to compose at the typewriter because that way I can tell what I feel and how I feel. For example, I like to write about my goals, my day to day activities . . . . I like to exteriorize my ideas because that way I can really know what I think and like about life.*

Here are are a few samples of the sentence-completion exercise:

I like typing because I like to see the finished product.

I would like for for this to be a successful semester.

I wish I had a big sister to talk my problems so she could tell me what to do.

I would like to become somebody important.

I think that students are very important to our countries future.

Another sentence-completion exercise results in a number of clever responses. The exercise, "Changing the Sayings," provides the beginnings of common sayings. The students type each sentence beginning and create their own ending for each. Again, they use the draft-edit-final steps. Here are a few creations:

Don't judge a book by its acknowledgements.

A stitch in time saves the whole thing from unraveling.

If at first you don't succeed, chuck it.

A bird in the hand is worth a meal for a cat.

People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw insults at one another.

You can lead a horse to water but you can't make him whistle.

You can't teach an old dog new math.

A bird in the hand is worth a mess.

As the semester progresses, it becomes apparent that WAC methodology not only helps students improve their keyboarding skills but also helps us get acquainted. The exercises promote rapport among us and give me the opportunity to know the class as individuals. These conditions, I feel, facilitate learning.

Step Three: Complete Sentences—and More

The next step is answering questions in complete-sentence form. I have used a series of twenty questions. Next semester I will create a different set of questions. I felt that some of the questions I used were so personal that they caused the students to hesitate rather than get fully involved in the exercise.

In the eleventh week students have another exercise in complete-sentence format. Again, the pattern is to create a rough draft without regard for correctness, edit the draft with editing symbols, and type the final from the edited draft as accurately as possible. In this case, however, I see the edited rough draft before the final is typed so that I can make suggestions regarding punctuation, grammar, construction, sentence structure, etc. Whenever a word is misspelled, I generally write *sp* in the margin and the student finds out how to spell the word before typing the final. I choose not to mark every error so that the students will not become too self-conscious about their work.

The assignment is to list five items they would take on a camping trip to a lake in the mountains for a week. They can take only these five items. Then they compose a sentence for each item listed that explains why they are taking it. Here is an example of a completed and revised assignment:

GOING CAMPING

1. *Sleeping box*
2. *Pillow*
3. *Food*
4. *Matches*
5. *Lamp*

Next week I'm going camping on the mountains for one week.

1. *A sleeping bag is one of the items that is very useful for camping.*

2. *Going camping is enjoyable and taking a pillow with you will make your camping more enjoyable.*
3. *I need to be sure that I have enough food for one week.*
4. *Also, I do not want to forget to bring some matches with me because it can be necessary on my standing in the mountains.*
5. *The importance of taking a lamp with you is certainly without doubt because it is an important item.*

About the twelfth week of class students get another opportunity to use editing techniques by composing a rough draft, editing, and typing the final of the following assignment:

LM 20; RM 80; TAB STOP 25 DS

Type a paragraph in rough draft telling me something about yourself. The paragraph must contain at least four sentences. It could be

1. Chronological
2. Based upon an incident or experience in your life
3. Something about your family
4. A goal you're working for
5. A dream you have

Don't worry about errors. Your objective is to get the ideas down on paper. Make changes by backspacing and X-ing out the error—then typing the correction. To make insertions, use the / and type the addition between the lines. Remove the paper from the typewriter. Make further changes in pencil. Bring me the rough draft when you are finished.

The first example, written by a man in his thirties, rekindled my pride in being a part of the educational community. The second example was written by a single-parent ESL student. The third example is a little story, beautiful in its simplicity, written by a woman from Japan.

> *I was still a kid when I was forced by the circumstances to leave school. I always felt the need to go back, but unfortunately I was too young to make that decision on my own. It is a little hard to describe the joy I felt when I discovered that I could fulfil my needs at this college. Now that I have found this great opportunity, I am working very hard to meet my goals.*

My Life

> *My name is . . . I was born in Mexico City. I emmigrate to the U.S. On 1979. I got married and have four children which I have raised until now. I decided to come back to school to learn; to be a better person: dedicated and proud of my self. To have a better life myself and children. I know is going to take some time and hard work. But I think I can make it. If things keep going well hopefully I would graduate in five years.*

Evening at Home

It is winter. I had done my day's work, and my children Dicky and Kathy, have come home from school. They learned their lessons well today, and both feel happy. Dicky and Kathy read a story in a book. By and by, they tell me what they have been reading about, and will have a chat over the events of the day.

Dicky and Kathy's bedtime will come first. I think I see them kiss a good night.

The last composition exercise was designed to help students prepare for the final exam:

Type a short paragraph in rough draft form. Use a left margin of 20, a right margin of 85, and a paragraph indention of five spaces.

Pretend you are explaining proper typing technique to a non-typist. Explain what you know about proper technique including finger movement and position, position of body and head, movement and position of arms and hands, placement of feet, and proper use of the shift and tab keys.

Type the rough draft quickly to get the ideas down on paper. As you have done before, X out errors while you type; pencil additional changes after you have removed the paper from the typewriter. Let me see your draft at this point. Then type the final composition with a two-inch top margin. Submit the rough draft along with the final copy. The final should have no more than four typographical errors.

I had no idea that students can get carried away in a discussion of typing technique! The young person who wrote the following draft, only a portion of which you see, was very involved in this exercise; her final product was a page and a half long. She had mastered the concept of draft-edit-final by letting the ideas flow, X-ing out, crossing out, and making handwritten changes. Her final copy had only one typographical error in it.

Proper Typing Technique

There are many things you should keep in mind when typing with the proper technique.

Movement and position of the fingers are very important. The fingers should stroke the keys quickly and accurately and return immediately to the home row. They should be sure of where they are at all times so that accuracy is as close as possible to 100%. Your fingers should also be curved over the keyboard, not lying down on it. Your wrists should be level with your fingers and elbows.

The position of the body and head is also important. You should not have to strain to see what you are typing. Your position should be comfortable but not lazy posture. The back of the chair should be in the small of your back so that you do not strain your back. The more comfortable you are the better you will type. Your back should be straight and feet flat on the floor.

The position of the arms and hands is important because your arms need to hanging straight from your shoulders and your elbows should not be moving in or out. If your arms are in the right position, your wrists should be over the keyboard not resting on the base. This in turn should put your fingers right above the keys they will be typing fast and

> *accurately. As you can see, one depends on the other and down the line.*

Conclusion

Some of the benefits I have observed from the use of writing-intensive methodology in Typewriting I include these.

1. Students enjoyed the WAC exercises, primarily because they were able to learn by doing and because they were able to express their feelings on several topics.
2. Keyboarding technique and control improved. In a typical class, the Beginning Class Error Rate on a three-minute timed writing was 4.69 and the Ending Class Error Rate was 1.45.
3. In some cases students' language skills improved, and ESL students appeared to be more confident in their use of English.
4. In a few cases, the exercises served as a cathartic mechanism for students who needed to say something but couldn't on a face-to-face basis.
5. For some, writing served as an outlet for artistic expression.
6. Writing provided variety and a change of pace for the class, directly affecting motivation.
7. Students appeared to be free of writing anxiety, perhaps because they were not threatened by a grade and they had nothing to lose by doing the exercises. It appeared they did not consider the exercises as "writing."
8. Composing assignments provided valuable feedback and information which revealed students' feelings and attitudes toward the course, students' grasp of concepts, language skills, and expectations for the course and their futures. The following is an example of feedback:

   > *I feel great doing composing in typing because it helps you to think what you want to write and at the same time typing it. It also helps me in typing, for example getting to type faster and with no mistakes. It is helping me a lot.*

Writing exercises in Typewriting I seem to be most effective when woven inconspicuously into the fabric of the course rather than tacked on as appendages. I believe that the exercises should move gradually from the simple to the complex, be frequent, and be short. Students should be able to move smoothly into more demanding writing situations in subsequent courses as a result of the experience.

Editor's Commentary

Marilee Aldana's ingenuity helped her to realize that writing can be used to reinforce the learning of skills, not just the learning of concepts. Many of our participants used writing only for tasks involving "higher order learning," and their students continued to think of writing as a "hard" assignment, associated mainly with purely academic concerns. Writing need not be hard, nor must it always involve complex topics that require a lengthy response. As Agnes Robinson and her colleagues in the writing-across-the-curriculum program at El Paso Community College rightly recognize, short assignments can be just as effective as long ones, especially if you offer a number of them and spread them out over the entire course, gradually building from simple to complex and short to long, and moving from familiar to unfamiliar material. If you begin by having the students fill out simple forms or answer simple questions, you will find it easier to work the assignments into your syllabus and the students will get used to the idea of putting pen to paper before they have to produce a piece of writing that is long and difficult for them.

Marilee Aldana's strongest point in her course design was her use of these principles in the sequencing of assignments. One point we hear again and again from teachers who, like Marilee, have had success in weaving writing assignments effectively into their syllabi, is that the students don't really think of writing as writing. They come to accept it as an ordinary, commonplace activity of everyday life—and that's exactly what it should be and will be for them in their occupational lives.

One very good tactic Marilee used was to begin assignments with incomplete sentences. Often students have trouble getting the first words onto paper, and they will take whatever language you give them as a part of their first sentences—even if your language is not intended to be used in this way and even if the language you have provided makes a very awkward opening. If, for example, you ask them to write an essay on the topic, "Concepts Learned in the Typing Class," they are likely to write something like "Concepts learned in the typing class are important in everyday life. . . ." as their first sentence and then find themselves without a logical step to the next sentence; they will get stuck and become frustrated. Anyone who has read student papers has seen such clumsy efforts at getting started. Marilee hints at a solution to the problem: give students an effective sentence beginning so that they will have some language to get them started, so that they are not left facing a blank page with a blank mind. Restate your topic as follows: "Four concepts I learned in my typing class are. . . ." Then tell the students that, after they write a good opening sentence, they should write a short paragraph on each of the four concepts they have listed. This way you give them language and form, which in early assignments they will sorely need.

Chapter 21

A Writing-Intensive Course in Respiratory Care

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I have been a Respiratory Therapist for over ten years but have just recently begun to teach. My first semester as an instructor was one of the most horrible experiences of my life because I found that I had no idea how to teach. I researched effective instructional methods, talked with fellow instructors about their first-year teaching problems, wrote and rewrote lesson plans, watched audio-visuals in the hopes of making my classes more interesting, and polled the students on their feelings about how I could make my classes better. In every way I searched for the magic formula to be a successful teacher.

Thus, when I first heard about writing as a way to enhance student learning, I immediately got involved. My students had problems with answering essay questions on tests and even worse problems with assignments such as case studies, which involve investigating and researching information and then, based on that information, drawing conclusions about the care of the patient. I have always written without any problem, so the fact that my students had trouble puzzled me, especially since these students had passed a course in technical writing. Initially, I thought that if I assigned a paper, they would write it, I would grade it, and they would have achieved the intended objective.

At the beginning of my second year of teaching, the West Texas Project in Writing across the Curriculum gave an in-service presentation at my college, and during that in-service I heard other teachers talking about the same problems I was having. I decided that maybe it was my approach that was wrong rather than a lack of teaching ability.

Several possibilities occurred to me during that presentation. One was that I should make more frequent assignments so that the students would get more comfortable with writing; another was that I should gear my assignments toward real-world writing that would be required on the job. I left the in-service feeling much more self-confident and excited. I must have been doing something right because other instructors felt as I did about the poor quality of their students' assignments. All I needed to do was to relate my assignments to real-world situations and I would get excellent papers and my students would have improved communication skills and everything would be fine. However, I discovered there was much more to it than that.

An Assignment that Didn't Work

In the Respiratory Care Program at South Plains College, I teach a course titled Advanced Clinical Procedures in the hospitals. One of the rotations is designed to teach management skills to sophomore level students, and I thought this would be an excellent real-world situation of a paper. The students' clinical experiences with department managers would be the perfect setting, since writing reports is a major part of their job. During the in-service I had learned that if students write about something they re interested in they do a better job. Therefore, I let my students choose any topic in Respiratory Care, and to avoid duplication of topics, I approved each topic. The topics ranged from from a presentation on professional ethics and one on death and dying to very technical reports on such subjects as hemodynamic monitoring and arterial blood gas interpretation.

I attempted to make this assignment audience-directed by having my sophomore students present their reports to a group of underclassmen, the rationale begin that they would have to instruct or inform patients, physicians, and peers on procedures or equipment at some time in their careers. I had also discovered during the equipment at some time in their careers. I had also discovered during the in-service that writing is better organized and presented if the writers have an audience in mind. Since patients are often not able to communicate well verbally, I asked the students to use audio-visual aids to make their presentations more effective.

I gave my students the following assignment:

A research paper on any topic in Respiratory Care, must be approved by the instructor, to be presented to the freshman class. The presentation must include:

a) audio-visual support
b) written objectives, and
c) a method to evaluate the objectives.

The objectives for this assignment are:

a) To prepare the student for discussion of procedures or disease processes with a patient, patient's family, fellow professional or physician;
b) To ensure the ability of students to organize their thoughts in writing as well as orally;
c) To have the student demonstrate alternatives to written and oral communication
d) To inform the underclassmen about a topic they had not been exposed to previously; and
e) To provide an understanding of the preparation involved in effective instruction.

The students accepted the assignment with no complaints. I asked to see a rough draft in eight to ten weeks. During their clinical rotation in the hospital, I arranged time for them with an educational coordinator, who discussed writing objectives and helped them choose audio-visual aids. I kept track of their progress by asking the educational coordinator whether they were working on their papers, to which she always replied affirmatively.

When I began to look at rough drafts, I realized the students were not going to be able to produce a product of the quality I had intended. At that point in the semester, I had let too much time elapse to be able to go back and regroup. The final drafts they handed in were no better than previous assignments, and it was too late in the semester to ask for revisions, so instead of asking them to revise the papers I concentrated my efforts on trying to ensure that the quality of their presentations was adequate. I did not want them to be embarrassed in front of their peers.

I had the students present their papers to their own classmates for critiques, and the classmates had very constructive criticism. A week after these presentations it was time for the final presentation to the freshman class. The presentations were not very good. The students had not taken the advice of their fellow classmates and virtually repeated the same mistakes they had made before. Most of the students just got up and read their reports, made no eye contact, and sometimes did not even make sense. the freshmen evaluated the overall quality of the presentations and had several negative comments:

> *They didn't know the material well enough to be presenting it.*
>
> *They should have practiced before they did this.*
>
> *Were they talking about things they knew about?*
>
> *This was a waste of time.*
>
> *Only two of these presentations were even worth listening to.*

I video-taped a few of the presentations and when those students saw the tape they were quick to recognize their own mistakes. All of us realized that the entire project had not worked. This was not my magic formula.

Dealing with the Problems

At a summer workshop sponsored by the West Texas Project in Writing across the Curriculum, I had the opportunity to talk with a number of experienced teachers from various fields. I discovered why my experiment in writing had not met all my expectations. I did several things wrong or not at all.

1. I gave my students only this one writing assignment. I could have made this assignment more effective had I required written assignments more often. The students did not know that they could do any better because they had not been given the opportunity to practice. I could have had small writing assignments such as scenarios for them to interpret and draw conclusions from, or throughout the semester I might have asked essay questions on tests. In this way students would have been building their writing skills as well as their confidence.

2. I encouraged the students' false beliefs in only one rough draft rather than multiple revisions by asking to see the rough draft only once. I thus reinforced their misconception that a paper is written in two copies, the rough draft and the final draft. Looking at multiple drafts would have given me the opportunity to help the students to revise their papers.

3. I did not work with students individually to see what their writing problems might be. I wrongly assumed they would have no problems and did not allow time for consultation with me early in the project.

Since the workshop, I have repeated the assignment, doing several things differently and with excellent results. I now require the students to turn in a rough draft early in the project, and I grade it very critically for content as well as overall scope and depth. I grade punctuation and grammar on the rough draft because I want them to do revision and editing. Now I work individually with each student during clinical time to catch any problems so that I can refer them to the library, student assistance center or any number of allied health libraries available to the students in the hospitals.

The video-tapes have been a great teaching tool. I use them during the revision stage rather than at the end. This allows the students to see a good and bad presentation in time to make changes.

Since I now do all the things I should have been doing before, the results are dramatically different. The quality of the papers is so much better than I had hoped, and the students are able to prepare and present very difficult material in a concise and understandable way.

I learned the hard way that writing assignments are not an end in themselves but a means to an end. Making writing assignments requires time and effort on my part beyond reading the final product and placing a grade on it. It requires evaluation, monitoring, preparation and time. The students need to become comfortable with writing in order to do a good job just as they need reassurance, knowledge, and practice to take care of patients.

Editor's Commentary

Cathy Bitsche, like many of the teachers in our project, came to us as an experienced professional in her field who had just started teaching—a rather typical case in post-secondary vocational-technical education. She was excited about the prospect of using writing as a teaching technique, but, as a good writer herself, she had trouble identifying with her students when they failed at the tasks she set for them. She very quickly learned one of the hardest lessons in writing across the curriculum: it is not enough to give writing assignments; we must also prepare our students to perform the writing we assign.

She began with some excellent principles: (1) show the students the relation of the assignment to actual work situations to increase motivation, (2) give the students a context and an audience for the assignment to help them to see the purpose of their communication, and (3) require that the students turn in a rough draft. She came to realize, however, that submitting a draft doesn't do much good unless it comes early enough for the teacher to make useful comments toward revision. The best approach is to have students write long papers in short increments and to submit early drafts of each section. Also, the teacher should, as Cathy suggests, give real directions for improving the paper and avoid such mystifying comments as "Work on grammar," "Do more research," or "Make it more professional."

Cathy also had the good sense to enlist the aid of an "educational coordinator" and to send students to work in the student assistance center at her college. But from this experience she learned another of the hard lessons of writing across the curriculum: tutors and teachers trained in English cannot substitute for the teacher in the technical field in advising the student on how to write the best and most appropriate paper. If you want good papers, you must consult with the students and let them know specifically what you want.

Chapter 22

A Writing-Intensive Course in Basic Accounting II

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What began as an adventure into the uncharted waters of teaching quickly evolved into a learning experience for both teacher and students in the most unlikely of subjects—accounting. Basic Accounting II is a course which has traditionally been by lecture with very little dialogue between teacher and student except during the testing phase.

The past seventeen years of my life have been spent in the practical application of accounting principles, first in private accounting as a controller, then as a Certified Public Accountant in public practice. The idea of teaching, while not foreign to me, was new, and I approached the task with several preconceived attitudes about how my goal should be accomplished.

Late in the Fall semester of 1987, I was asked to participate in the West Texas Project in Writing across the Curriculum Project. My teaching plan had already been formulated for the fall semester, but I was willing to revise it because, as luck would have it, I had only three students, which left me plenty of time to try different methods of teaching. As a new teacher, I felt obliged to try any technique which would help my students learn accounting.

Adding Writing Assignments to an Accounting Course

Since my course syllabus had already been prepared and we were well into the semester, I decided to add a written assignment as an "extra credit" activity which would be graded and used to enhance but not detract from each student's final grade. The assignment fell at the same time a "practice set" was due and so was not received with a great deal of enthusiasm.

The writing assignment was designed to develop and embellish ideas contained in the practice set. Each student was asked to write two letters. The first was a letter to be written in non-technical language addressed to the owners of the business used in the practice set. The writer was to assume the position of in-house accountant and advise the owners of an existing partnership that they should incorporate. Each student was encouraged to research the subject and provide points not covered in class or the textbook. The second letter was to be written to the independent accountant of the partnership advising in more technical language what type of inventory procedure should be used by the company and developing further the evolution of the business form partnership to corporation. Again, each student was encouraged to present ideas which would reflect additional time spent in researching the subject.

Fall 1987 Semester

The assignments in the Fall semester of 1987 produced mixed results. One student's letters were well composed, typewritten, and logically presented. The second student's letters were handwritten and contained only minimal substance but were complete. The third student's letters were an incomplete effort to provide any information. In grading the letters, I ignored the writer's ability to present thoughts logically and clearly and focused only on independent thinking that reflected time and effort. The overall results, however, were disappointing. Each student simply regurgitated points covered in the textbook or in lecture.

Thus, I rate my first attempt at utilizing writing assignments to increase learning as a complete failure. From that experience I learned several things about the need to incorporate writing in the overall course structure. First, writing assignments cannot simply be tacked on to a course as additional assignments. They must be well planned and the related learning objectives must be clearly explained to the student. Second, while students must be free to express themselves, they must be guided toward the expected outcome. Third, I also learned that the teacher cannot motivate students to learn nearly as effectively as students can motivate themselves and each other. The competitive spirit of my students was heightened much more by their peers than by me. Both motivations combined to provide synergistic reaction increasing the response and interaction of the entire class during the second semester which could not be effected in the first semester.

Spring 1988 Semester

During the Spring 1988 semester, I incorporated the lessons learned in the fall into my course to provide a more positive experience for all involved. The class syllabus included two written assignments. Each paper was planned to avoid significant conflict with other assignments and was timed to complement a learning objective completed in the class. I advised the students of the grading standards, the required format, and the content review to be used. They were to submit each paper for review and comment. They were then encouraged to revise their letters and submit them again for a final grade. Since each student was free to revise his or her letter or let it stand as originally submitted, only one revised paper was received. I can assure you that letter received a very high grade. Students were also advised that the written assignments would provide a partial basis for final grade determination.

Conclusions

From a beginning teacher's perspective, these assignments were gratifying in that it was clear that students had devoted significant effort and thought to each letter. Furthermore, these assignments complemented the learning process. Some letters contained graphs to illustrate points developed, and one letter was prepared on a laser printer for a professional looking presentation.

The differences between the Fall 1987 semester and the Spring 1988 semester were that (1) I gave the students the directions for the writing assignment so that they could refer to them and (2) I timed the assignments to avoid the "snowball" effect which takes place toward the end of the semester when the majority of course assignments are due. This planning paid dividends: the students' letters in the Spring semester were superior to those of the preceding semester and the second assignment was completed with approximately four weeks before the end of the semester.

An interesting note should be mentioned at this point. I had initially planned to include only the two World-of-Work writing assignments. The remainder of the course was originally designed around the traditional lecture format. However, with the results of these successful written assignments fresh on my mind, I also prepared a Writing-as-Learning assignment.

Students were divided into three groups and made a presentation to the class involving a system of internal accounting controls. Each group designated a speaker who presented the group's ideas and conclusions. Written outlines were used to formalize the presentation of the subject matter. After each presentation, the class posed questions which were answered by the group making the presentation. After all presentations were completed, the class was asked to critique the assignment as a learning tool. Responses were uniformly positive for varying reasons. Each students saw the experience as a learning method which was superior to the typical lecture format.

While this type of teaching is more time consuming than the traditional lecture/test method, it should be considered as an integral part of the teaching process. Students learn by many methods, and my experience has been that, given the proper amount of planning, the use of several methods increases learning over the sue of any one method by itself. While I haven't perfected the procedure, I am convinced that the use of written assignments is an essential tool to be used to increase learning both by the student and the teacher.

Editor's Commentary

Steve Watt entered our project in writing across the curriculum as many teachers do; he was a new teacher looking for effective techniques to incorporate into his class plan. Certainly his instincts were correct on a couple of points: (1) He began with a few manageable, short assignments; one of the problems with programs that require teachers to meet word limits in writing-intensive courses is that they do not permit teachers to start at their own pace and grow as they feel comfortable with handling writing assignments. (Note that, without external administrative mandates, Steve added a significant Writing-as-Learning assignment after discussions with his colleagues and with project staff advisors led him to see the potential benefits.) (2) He began with a form of writing with which he, as a professional accountant, was very familiar—the business letter.

Other matters of course planning caused him to learn some tough lessons, which are worth repeating for emphasis: (1) Writing assignments must be integrated carefully into the course plan if they are effectively to fulfill course objectives. (2) Students "must be guided toward expected outcomes." (3) The teacher must allow time for revision and for peer response (which, as Steve discovered, will not only improve writing but may increase motivation through competition).

Chapter 23

Managerial Writing: A Skill as Important as Any Other Management Function

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"Give me managers who know how to write!"

That admonition should have a familiar ring to management educators in Texas. It's what business executives have been telling us for quite some time.

We have been told repeatedly that skill in writing is a major factor in determining how far a person will advance in business. There is no question in my mind that communication is the ingredient which makes organizations possible. Indeed, communication is the vehicle through which the basic management functions of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling are carried out.

The Assignment

In response to the advice to emphasize writing skills, the Management Department of San Antonio College instituted management term paper requirements for each of the four core curriculum courses leading to the associate degree. Since the four core curriculum courses are interdependent parts of a unified learning experience, specific guidelines and requirements have been established for each.

Objective

The greatest challenge, in my opinion, is to teach students in the introductory course how to plan, organize, and execute what seems to them to be a difficult and onerous task—the writing of a term paper. Many of these students are taking their first college course, and most have not yet had freshman composition.

Benefits

The most important phase of teaching the assignment is to impress on students the *need* to learn to do this kind of writing. My approach almost becomes a blatant appeal to their self-interest. At the first meeting of these classes I emphasize that preparing readable reports is an inevitable part of a career in management. I also emphasize and illustrate with personal examples that the ability to organize and analyze information, to communicate such information, and to present it attractively and correctly is one of the most important attributes for aspiring managers.

Almost equally important as emphasizing the need to learn to write well is the task of convincing students that they can succeed in these assignments. This confidence-building session is as important as any single part of the first instruction session. I always emphasize that I have successfully taught many other students how to complete such equally challenging writing assignments and that I have the utmost confidence in their ability to be able to complete this assignment.

Statement of the Assignment

The actual assignment is made at the first class meeting both orally and amplified with appropriate handouts. From the beginning the students know the paper requirements. The body of the report should be of sufficient length to cover the subject adequately, but should be a minimum of ten double-spaced typewritten pages. The paper must contain a minimum of seven parts:

1. Cover
2. Title page
3. Letter of transmittal
4. Table of contents
5. Main body
6. Conclusions and recommendations, or a summary
7. Bibliography

The student may select any subject within the management field subject to my approval. Subject approval is important because it is not uncommon for beginning students to attempt a subject which would be too comprehensive for a paper of the scope assigned. Additionally, some topics may be so obscure that adequate source material may be difficult or impossible to obtain.

The Process

Once the assignment is made and the students are familiar with the writing requirements, I begin teaching the "how to" part of this exercise. We are now ready to explore systematically the topic of "writing a management research report." This teaching phase primarily involves a lecture, supplemented with audio-visual material. I divide the task of writing the report into nine steps, and I strongly encourage my students to approach their assignment in this manner.

Step One—Selecting a Subject

I suggest that possible subjects can be found by examining the course syllabus, management textbooks, management encyclopedias and other management reference books, and the table of contents in recent issues of management journals. Since students will be spending a long time working on the subject, I strongly encourage them to try to select a subject that interests them and that has some relevancy to their jobs. At this time I distribute another handout containing approximately 100 potential management subjects for student consideration. If none of those subjects is appealing, students are free to come up with any other subject in the field of management, subject only to my approval.

Step Two—Narrowing the Subject

Once students have selected the subject which interests them, they need to narrow that subject into a specific topic. I explain the importance of this step because if one does not focus on a topic, the subject will be too broad to cover in the space and time available. One of the best ways to begin the narrowing process is to read a background article on one's chose subject in a management encyclopedia. This background article can help narrow the subject by suggesting specific topics.

Step Three—Writing a Statement of Intent

Writing a statement of intent helps clarify the purpose of the report. This statement of intent enables students to be explicit about the paper's intended content. It leads to focused rather than diffused writing by serving as a guide for one's writing effort. I always illustrate this step with example of statements of intent on a variety of management topics.

Step Four—Compiling a Working Bibliography

Since familiarity with a library looms large at this step, I always seek the professional help of one of our San Antonio College librarians, who graciously agrees to come to my classes to present basic library search strategies. By following the basic library search strategy, students are able to identify, locate, and use appropriate library materials to satisfy their information needs. Basically, this search strategy focuses on finding background information, finding books, and finding periodical articles. In addition to this presentation, the librarian gives each student a seven-page handout which is extremely valuable for future reference.

Having acquired a basic familiarity with libraries, the student is now able to compile a working bibliography, a list of books, articles, and other sources which the student hopes will supply the information needed to write the report. I point out that it is not necessary to look at books, periodicals, or other information sources in order to list them in the working bibliography. All needed information can be found in the card catalog, literature guides, and periodical and newspaper indexes. Also, preparing a list of sources at this time will reveal if there are enough materials available for the student to write a report.

Step Five—Preparing a Working Outline

A working outline organizes the student's ideas and provides a plan for gathering information about these ideas. Like the working bibliography, the working outline may change as the student does the research.

Step Six—Taking Notes

I explain that careful note-taking is the key to a quality report. Clear and accurate notes will help avoid inadequate documentation, inaccuracy, and confusion. It also prevents having to go back through sources to clarify note cards.

I suggest that in order to take notes, the student needs to read or scan the books, articles, and other information sources from the working bibliography and write down information considered useful for the report. At this point, I feel it is necessary to caution students on the dangers of plagiarism and how to avoid it.

Step Seven—Organizing the Note Cards and Preparing the Final Outline

This step is probably the hardest for my students, and it is also the most difficult to teach. I try to emphasize that organization is the backbone of a report. No matter how complete, thorough, and accurate the research has been, if the student does not put the information into an understandable order then the report will not be useful. One way to organize the notes is to group similar ideas according to the content of the note cards and put the ideas in a logical order. It is at this stage that the student decides to take more notes on an idea or discard the idea as not being important to the report. As the student arranges and groups the note cards, he or she is actually formatting an outline of the logical order for presenting ideas.

Step Eight—Writing and Revising the Draft

Once the outline is finished, the student is ready to expand it in into the draft. The aim of the draft is to turn the outline into prose by presenting ideas and supporting them with the information from the notes. I always emphasize that this is no time to worry about word choice, sentence structure, punctuation, or spelling because these details can be attended to later. The idea here is to write as ideas pop into one's head and to get those thoughts on paper. Of course, students should visualize their report in terms of an introduction, a main body, and a conclusion.

Once the first draft is complete, a student should begin the process of revision. Some papers might have to be revised several times to make sure they are on target. It is advisable to read the paper aloud, checking its organization and content to see that the ideas have been fully and logically developed. I urge my students to check transitions between paragraphs and sections and to check for such things as good sentence structure, proper grammar, and correct spelling and punctuation. It's a good idea to continue to review and revise the draft until the writer is satisfied with the report.

Step Nine—Preparing the Final Report

When the student is satisfied, it is time for the final step--preparing the final report. I always emphasize that preparing the final report is very important. A neat, well-arranged report creates a favorable impression in the reader's mind and may make him or her more receptive to the information in the report. A messy, poorly arranged report is likely to have the opposite effect.

The Style Guide

The Management Department of San Antonio College uses *A Manual of Style for the Preparation of Papers and Reports*, 3rd Edition, by Erwin M. Keithley and Philip J. Schreiner, as a format guide. Since this assignment often is the first research project of this magnitude for many of my students, I spend a considerable amount of time in summarizing the highlights of this manual.

Over about five hours in primarily a lecture-type presentation, I specify such format details as cover, title page, table of contents, letter of transmittal, summary, margins, references to the bibliography (attribution), direct quotations, pagination, headings and subtitles, appearance, and bibliography.

Once the student is certain the format is correct, the content is accurate, and that there are no errors in grammar, sentence structure, spelling and punctuation, the final typing may begin. The report must have no typing errors. My students probably hate to have me emphasize and re-emphasize that they are responsible for correcting errors before the final typing is begun and then for proof-reading the final copy of the report. When the students have done these things and are sure that the report represents their best effort,t hey have completed the management research report. I don't need to tell my students what to do then. Their collective sigh of relief is probably audible over much of San Antonio.

Conclusion

This description of my incorporating a term research paper into the first management course should convey the idea that the assignment is not easy—for me or my students. But when this assignment is approached in a positive manner, step-by-step, it can become an attainable goal. Many students mildly, but earnestly, protest that they don't have enough time to complete the paper, that they will have to sacrifice their other course work, or that there is too much work involved for the credit received. The best reassurances I can give such students is to quote a former student of mine regarding this assignment: "I hated having to do the management term paper. But now that I've completed it, I can truthfully say that the assignment was the most rewarding of my college career."

Teaching inadequately-prepared students how to write a term paper is difficult enough in the setting of an English composition classroom. Teaching a term paper in the vocational-technical management classroom presents the ultimate challenge in teaching students to write.

Editor's Commentary

The writing-across-the-curriculum program at San Antonio College has been heavily influenced by what we call the "academic model" in Chapter 1. (For more on the program at SAC, see the chapters by Marshall, Soliz, Twomey, and DeArmond.) Though we think that this model often leads, as the foregoing chapter admits, to great difficulties for the student and the teacher, we have included Jack Walker's chapter for several reasons: (1) In the interest of balance, we wanted to give a good example of how term papers can be used by conscientious teachers, especially since very often these kinds of assignments are preferred in administrative mandates on writing across the curriculum. (2) Such assignments, in the hands of a sharp teacher like Jack Walker, may be shown to accomplish professional goals; after all, in fields like management, professionals very often have to produce reports that in some ways resemble traditional research papers in a college course. (3) Jack demonstrates the necessity of leading students through every stage of the process of producing such a paper.

It is this last point that we want to emphasize. The battle cry of contemporary composition theorists is "process, not product!" The trend these days in writing instruction is to help students know *how* and *why* to write as well as *what* to write. This requires a significant time commitment on the part of the teacher. The process of writing must become a lecture and discussion topic to be covered in addition to regular course content. Jack, and many other good teachers like him in the writing-across-the-curriculum movement, believe that it is worthwhile to take the time to help students learn how to communicate (as well as what to communicate) as part of their professional development.

Chapter 24

Writing and Organizational Behavior

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During the Spring 1987-88 semester I participated in the El Paso Community College Writing across the Curriculum project by teaching Management 3104, Organizational Behavior, as a writing-intensive class. The eight-week minimester class was taught at Ft. Bliss, the U. S. Army Air Defense Center in El Paso, Texas. The course is offered to military personnel, but if space is available, remaining seats may be filled by civilian personnel. Because the military now requires that promotions be based on evidence of additional educational advancement, most of the class members are career soldiers who take college courses for promotion. Class participants range in age from eighteen to the late forties and are mainly Hispanic or Black men and women. Most students have completed some high school or have graduated from high school. However, some of the participants also have six to fifteen college credit hours.

Instructor Assessment of Writing Need

Before they enrolled in my course, most of the students had not been required to write very much. They had been evaluated mainly by examinations that consisted of multiple choice and fill-in-the blank questions. Thus, it was not surprising that most of them could not put their ideas on paper in a logical manner.

To assure that the students wrote a lot, there were no formal exams in the course. All evaluation was based on graded and non-graded writing and some group writing developed by teams.

The most important outcome of the course was that students showed personal and group improvement. They came to feel more comfortable with the writing process.

Assignments

The first night of class each student completed a Student Information Sheet for me. From their responses I learned how well the students could write and organize thoughts on paper. The Student Information Sheet contained these questions:

- What do you read on a regular basis? Why?
- What are the radio or TV programs you listen to or watch? Why?
- What is the course you have taken, at any time, which you liked the most? which you liked least? Why?

From this information I was able to design specific written assignments and prepare the class for those assignments. The following sections explain the five assignments that were part of the course during the minimester. These assignments sought to elicit student's thoughts and statements concerning the subjects and topics covered during the course.

Assignment 1

The first assignment was used as an "ice breaker" for the class. The students were able to formulate their ideas in papers that would then be used during class discussion when we covered the topic of "Communications." The assignment, based on an article "Do You Know Me?" from the January 25, 1988 issue of *Business Week*, was as follows:

> Write a "non-graded" summary of the article and relate it to the concepts in the textbook chapter dealing with communication. This is an "opinion" paper. One question you might ask yourself is "Just how well does James Robinson communicate?" While this is an opinion paper, it is important that you relate to the concepts of what good communication is all about.

After completing this writing-to-learn assignment, the class discussed the concepts in the article and in the textbook chapter dealing with communication. One of the main factors the class found was just how much perception plays in the communication of individuals.

Only one student indicated a distaste for this writing assignment. In general, the class felt that the assignment aided them in focusing on the essentials of good communication by enabling them to express their thoughts about the communication process and by enabling them to [illegible] about the communication activities of a powerful corporation executive.

Assignment 2

The second assignment required students to explain how perceptions are often the result of value issues found in a culture. The topics of "groups" and "group behavior" were discussed. One of the aspects of group behavior is value issues of behavior modification, which deals with cultural differences and how cultural values influence change. The students were given a handout and the following assignment:

> Read the handout that deals with "The Value Issues of Behavior Modification" and write an essay that is based on the facts found in the article. Use the three questions at the end of the article as the basis for your paper. However, do not just answer the questions as you write the paper. Focus on how behavior modification can influence a group to accept or reject change that affects the group formally and informally.

After writing the essay, students discussed the issues of the concepts contained in the handout. I read and made comments on each of the student papers in order to encourage growth in writing development. My major concern at this point was for the organization of the paper; I looked for writing logic and flow of ideas. The class indicated that they learned from the assignment. The open discussion gave students a better understanding of how to formulate their ideas and to communicate them on paper.

Assignment 3

The third writing assignment was based on a 25-page handout dealing with group work strategies in order to reinforce the concept of team building. The handout consisted of photocopies of *Business Week* articles and had a conceptual framework for the stated learning objectives. For this assignment, the class was divided into four groups with a team leader for each. The remaining two class members served as outside consultants who evaluated the various group activities and progress. Written evaluations from the group, group leader, and consultants were to be given to the instructor for class discussion.

> Four class members will be selected as group leaders. They are to plan, organize, and direct the activities of each group based upon the learning objectives of the handout. These groups, the team leaders, and the consultants will prepare written evaluations on how well the learning objectives were met by the group. The assignment requires critical thinking for the written evaluation to take place.

After completing the assignment, the class discussed each group's ability to meet the stated learning objectives and how well each group was able to evaluate itself. The consultants led the discussion and provided verbal feedback on the various groups' written performance evaluations.

Students evaluated this writing-to-learn activity as excellent. The assignment did what I had hoped in terms of team building as a result of the readings and the written evaluations of each group. The class discussed the group evaluations and the consultant evaluations, making excellent comments on perception about what took place from group to group. This assignment was so successful that I will use it again with other classes and in different ways.

Assignment 4

The fourth assignment was a structured case analysis, in which students studied a particular organization problem and recommended a solution to the problem. A sample of the the format and a sample of a previous case was given to the students. In this assignment students had to move from critical thinking to critical writing. Five formal cases were completed during the eight-week period. After the fourth writing-to-learn assignment was completed, the class discussed each case and the recommended solutions for each problem.

Students tell me that they noticed improvement in their ability to communicate ideas and thoughts in a more organized manner. Students also told me that they saw the effect of the assignments in job performance improvement.

Assignment 5

The fifth writing assignment required students to write an essay that integrated what they understood about the concept of excellence within the context of an organization. What I was interested in was how the student applied the concept of excellence that was developed during the course. The assignment was as follows:

Write a non-graded paper on the topic: "How I view the concept of excellence in an organization." Ask yourself, "What does excellence mean to me in the cultural aspect of an organization?" Look at the environment in which the organization attempts to function. Remember all the various concepts of organizational behavior we have covered during the minimester when you develop your essay. This is an assignment to be completed outside of class and is to by typed or word processed.
(500-1000 words in length.)

In the class discussion that followed this assignment each student applied the concept of excellence to several facets of the organization where he or she was employed. Most of the students told me their they had not been asked to write their ideas and opinions or even asked to provide any evaluations such as the one asked for in this assignment. The assignment seemed to provide a clearer understanding of the work space and the interrelationships found within the space itself.

Success of the Writing-Intensive Class

I consider this project successful, because the students showed growth and improvement in their writing skills and their ability to analyze and synthesize information. The students also believed the class was successful, because they reported that they felt they had improved their thinking and writing abilities.

Editor's Commentary

Typical of the teachers in the writing-across-the-curriculum seminar at El Paso Community College, Stephen West shows a strong sense of how to plan and effectively sequence writing assignments. He also is able through his initial "icebreaking" assignments quickly to bring the students into a continuing dialogue with each other and with the teacher, thus providing a good model for the interactive classroom.

In a course on a topic like management, Stephen shows that it is relatively easy to increase student motivation in writing assignments by demonstrating the necessity of effective communication and the ability to interact with colleagues in industry. Also helpful, no doubt, is Stephen's own enthusiasm about writing. He himself is an author of poetry (and has used poetry writing in a variety of classes) as well as numerous managerial studies and reports. Like Ellen Marshall (see Chapter 5), he writes with his students and thus further increases motivation.

Chapter 25

Progressions: Writing to Increase Reading Skills in Fashion Merchandising

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Teaching Fashion Merchandising at El Paso Community College includes teaching a course in Fashion History and Trends. This class requires the student to view clothing in a completely new light. Before the enter their first Fashion course, even Fashion majors seldom reflect deeply on our use of clothing. Because these students must learn to view clothing as a result of various factors in our environment and psyche, they must begin to realize that our clothing choices are affected by aesthetic, social, cultural, technological, economic, and political factors.

The purpose of study for a fashion merchandiser or fashion designer is not only to learn the technicalities of pattern design or dollar merchandise planning but also to learn the subtleties of planning the clothing choices that will be accepted in the future. In this sense, the fashion student must become a true "student of life" and learn to understand the hearts and minds of customers. Fashion History is an entry level course and it has no prerequisites. The number of students in the course can range from eighteen to sixty-five with as many skills levels as people. The most typical student age is eighteen to twenty. Many students have poor reading skills that must improve in this class.

Reading for Success

Success in the fashion industry demands strong reading skills. If a person desires to advance in the field of fashion, he or she must learn to read quickly and accurately. Scanning, summarizing, and extracting information from daily trade journals is an important step on the ladder of success in this field. The fact that *Women's Wear Daily* celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary several years ago illustrates the value that the fashion industry places on the written word.

This daily trade journal, which covers such topics as the latest in designer ready-to-wear collections, financial business news, important legislation, economical climates, business survival tactics, technological advances, and the arts, is considered an absolute reading necessity for understanding the fashion industry. Furthermore, politics, economics, technology, production capabilities, computers, youth movements, theatre, films, television, music and more all help to determine what direction the ever changing fashion trends will take. Because of this constant interplay, any person who is determined to succeed in fashion must not only read well and often but should also enjoy the time spent reading.

People who do not understand what they read learn little of value, are unable to connect important points, and seldom enjoy reading.

Writing-across-the-curriculum assignments can open the doors to reading comprehension. Well designed writing assignments can teach students what kind of information to look for in a reading.

Because El Paso Community College serves a special population (57% use English as a second language), reading is a difficult task for many students. Each semester I poll my new students to find out how many students *like* to read. It is common to find only one person in twenty who enjoys reading.

Using the general principles of writing across the curriculum, I have encouraged a good number of students to read daily. One student from Mexico came to visit me three years after her graduation and told me that although she had learned a great deal while in college (she was a high A student), she wanted to thank me most for teaching her to *love* to read. She said that she was reading at every opportunity.

Such success can only come when the student comprehends what is being read. If the excitement that one feels upon *learning* new facts comes consistently enough, one will pick up books, trade journals, or newspapers more and more.

In this paper, I discuss the use of writing assignments that I have used to strengthen reading skills. These assignments require planning and some perception of student reading level. Better students may quickly lose interest in writing assignments that only require them to locate and copy facts from the text. However, poor readers will find that these assignments can guide their reading. Since El Paso Community College, like most community colleges, has a broad mix of students, the instructor can give a number of questions in a guided reading assignment and require that only a few of the questions be answered. In this way advanced student readers can answer questions that interest them. I suggest allowing the students to choose their own questions from a list.

Assignments to Aid in Textbook Reading

I have been developing writing assignments to encourage and enhance textbook reading since 1984. I have learned that directed writings work much better than open-ended writing assignments in the early semesters of the program. In later semesters, when students have developed more skills, open-ended or unstructured writing can be very beneficial.

In my first attempts to develop writing assignments to encourage reading, I learned a number of interesting things from my poorest assignments. Because students were not reading the chapters assigned from the textbook, I asked them to write about content in the textbook.

Assignment 1

Read pages 200-215 and write five questions that you might expect to see on a test. Answer the questions.

Assignments like this didn't accomplish much because the more advanced readers found them boring and the less advanced readers had no guidelines for reading and wrote questions of no importance. The only value that came out of these early assignments was that I learned that students who do not read well appear not to differentiate between important facts and secondary, supporting information in a textbook; this knowledge then led me to design more precise assignments.

Assignment 2

Write a brief essay on one of the following topics:

Topic 1. Give examples from the text that illustrate why the women of Crete were considered to be "the best dressed women in the known world."

Topic 2. After reading about the women of Crete, write a brief essay on the following: What modern culture do you think can claim "the best dressed women"? Discuss your choice and illustrate it with examples.

Because the students can choose either topic in this assignment, they sense a greater control over the type of thinking that is most comfortable and rewarding for them. I have much more success with this new assignment, and the student must read the text in order to do the assignment.

Assignments to Aid in Trade Journal Reading

Because students need to read and understand trade journals, I have developed a number of assignments using articles from *Women's Wear Daily*. Trade journals are more difficult to read than most textbooks for several reasons. Because the articles are most often written from interviews, they can jump from point to point many times within one page. Further, many new and unfamiliar words are used. Many of these unfamiliar words are common words that take on a different meaning in fashion business language. An English as a Second Language student will quickly be confused by terms such as *soft third quarter sales results*.

The first assignment that introduces the student to *Women's Wear Daily* requires that the student read a one-page article.

Assignment 3, Part 1

Read the attached article. Using a pink highlighter, highlight every word or concept that is unfamiliar to you.

Here it is important for the instructor to read the article and highlight all words that could be unfamiliar to the students. Because students are shy and don't like to admit to not knowing a word, they may say that they see no words that are unfamiliar. Once they realize that the instructor will go over words and ask for meanings they will be more honest in admitting their unfamiliarity with certain words and concepts..

When the students finish their reading, all new and unfamiliar words and concepts are discussed in class. The students then read the article a second time.

Assignment 3, Part 2

Read this article for the second time. Highlight in yellow what you feel to be the most important information in the article.

The instructor and the class then discuss the highlighted parts of the article. If the students do not find the most important information, the instructor can point it out and discuss its importance.

Assignment 3, Part 3

Write a two or three paragraph summary of this article.

This assignment can be completed in one class period and it helps the student to learn how to read the trade journal article. Students also learn that it is fine to admit that you don't know some word or concept that is being presented in the article but that it is important to learn what that word or concept means in order to understand the article.

The next *Women's Wear Daily* assignment uses an article that is more difficult because it discusses several major points. This article reports on a spring apparel market and it points out:

- new fashion trends
- how buyers feel about spending money for upcoming orders based on strength of sales for the last quarter
- how manufacturers feel about the orders they are receiving from buyers at the market.

This type of article is quite common in the trade journal so this assignment is designed to teach the student to read with questions in mind and then to answer those questions. In other words, the student must eventually ask "what is the topic or topics of this article?"

Assignment 4

Divide a paper into three columns and write the three topics listed above at the top of the different columns. Read the article. Each time you encounter a sentence that speaks to any of the three topics mentioned, write that sentence in the appropriate column. When you finish reading the article, take the information from each column and rewrite it into a paragraph. When you finish writing reread the article.

Students are asked to reread the article so that they can clearly see how much better they understand it the second time.

Assignment 5

Another step that I take with *Women's Wear Daily* requires group work and public speaking because both of these skills are important in the fashion industry. In this assignment, the class is divided into 3- or 4-person groups. I have the most success when I design the groups using the following method: students write their name on a piece of paper and then, based on earlier readings, place their name into one of three categories:

1. I understand the articles very well.

2. I understand the articles somewhat.

3. I understand the articles a little.

I make it clear that I will be the only one to read this information. I then put one person from each category into a group. I also avoid putting close friends into the same group, and I emphasize to the class that I want them to become familiar with everyone in the class because in the work arena it is often "who you know" that determines if you get a job and that they should learn to become associates as soon as possible.

Each group is given a different article on the same topic. I recommend the special editions of *Women's Wear Daily* for these assignments because they always carry a number of articles with different perspectives on the same topic. For example, a bridal issue may carry articles about a bridal dress manufacturer, a bridal department in a large retail store, fashion trends for mother-of-the-bride, a designer of one-of-a-kind bridal veils, etc. The different articles teach the student that a product is only successful when it reaches its targeted customers and these customers may be very different from anther business person's customers.

As homework, students must read and highlight the article for unfamiliar words and important information (again using different colors of highlighting). When the class meets, students form their respective groups and discuss their article. When the group feels that they understand the important information, they, as a group, write a summary of the article.

Next, each group has a speaker report (not read) the summary to the entire class. The groups that are hearing the article for the first time must take written notes.

I have had a great deal of success with this assignment. It accomplishes many different objectives. The better readers get the opportunity to explain merchandising concepts to the poor readers. The poor readers learn to ask questions of their peers. The group must agree on both the important points and how the summary should be written. Some of the students must speak in public and since we record the speakers they can then listen to themselves. Students must take written notes and finally, each student hears the summary of six or more articles with a different perspective on the same topic.

Writing for Fun or Understanding

One of my students' favorite assignments was designed to teach them to see different points of view. In Fashion History and Trends, we study clothing from prehistory to the future. I believe that the important perspective for a merchandiser or designer is not so much *what* was worn but *why* it was worn. Helping the students to understand that a culture which loves the human body will show it and a culture which loathes the body will hide it, or that status or group identification is extremely important to humans, or that young people often reject the styles of older people, etc. will allow them to better assess future trends in the the industry. So that students will begin to think these concepts through for themselves, I assign the following problems after students have studied the chapter on Egypt, seen a film and slides of artifacts, and discussed Egyptian thought and lifestyle.

Assignment 6

Write a letter to an ancient Egyptian telling him or her how you feel about their lifestyle, mores, clothing, etc.

A week later I assign the second part of the problem.

Assignment 7

Imagine that you are an ancient Egyptian who has traveled through time into the present. Write a letter to a modern day man, woman, or child telling them how you, as an ancient, feel about present lifestyles, mores, clothing, etc.

The wealth of feelings that come out of this assignment is fascinating and invigorating. The students come alive after this work so I assign it early in the first semester. I have enjoyed this assignment immensely and hope to pull some of the students' wonderful thoughts together into a journal for future students to read once they have finished this assignment. My objective for this journal is for the students to see how many different perspectives have come out of this assignment.

Assignments to Aid Test Taking

The final assignment that I will describe was developed after I gave the first Fashion History exam of this semester. Even though the students had been told what to study, the answers on the essay exam were completely unacceptable. The following week I told the students that the test answers were poor and that I would give them another chance.

First, I wrote four questions from the exam on a sheet of paper, and the students had to write a one-page paper on one of the four questions. I kept a record of which question each student was assigned. Next, the students had to retake the test. I was attempting to learn if writing on a particular topic would lead to a better essay on the exam. Test results were inconclusive. The overall performance on the second test was much better than the first test. Students answered all four questions in much greater depth than the first attempt. Perhaps a better test of the value of writing across the curriculum in improving essay test answers would be to give the students all topics of study before the test and only one topic of study as a writing assignment. Because the students knew that I was displeased with their performance on the first test, they studied much harder for the second test. If the students didn't know what was expected of them it would be easier to determine the effect of pre-writing on essay test taking.

Conclusion

Overall, the use of writing across the curriculum principles has been a rewarding part of the fashion curriculum. The students are taking a greater interest in their studies and realizing that learning can be more fun when they actively involve themselves in discovering knowledge instead of waiting to be told everything by their instructors. I am very happy that writing across the curriculum has come into my curriculum.

Editor's Commentary

Perhaps the greatest strength of Trish Winstead's course plan is her recognition of the important connection of reading and writing and her development of excellent short assignments designed to exploit writing in the service of reading. Another important insight, however, involves her use of traditional assignments in innovative ways, much as Jack Walker has done (see Chapter 23).

We were particularly impressed with her use of additional writing assignments as a means of improving student responses on essay tests. Too often, essay tests are a one-shot deal; students are unable to learn from their errors and can only hope to improve on the next test. But Trish keeps them writing after the test is over and then gives them a chance to improve their performance on the test. This essentially does the same job that revision of formal papers does: it reinforces learning of content while showing the students how to present their material in an effective way rather than expecting (or hoping) that they have somehow mastered the fine art of writing essay exams before they enter the class.

Part Six

Writing across the Curriculum—Preparing Teachers and Students

Chapter 26

Writing across the Curriculum as a Challenge in Faculty Development

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As a teacher my interest in the writing across the curriculum (WAC) movement began several years ago while taking a course on the relationship of reading and writing in secondary and post-secondary education. As I continued to read and attend workshops on the read/write connection, I became a firm proponent for writing as an excellent tool for learning new information, problem solving and teaching critical evaluation.

My work as a faculty development coordinator at San Antonio College gave me the opportunity to help other teachers benefit from some of the principles I had gathered in reading and attending workshops. This chapter summarizes the history of writing across the curriculum at San Antonio College—a story that at this writing is far from finished—and discusses the place of faculty development in that history. I hope that the insights we have gained thus far will help others who are developing such programs to keep the individual faculty member in mind in the fervor of planning activity at the administrative level.

San Antonio College Addresses the Winds of Change

During the time my interest in WAC was growing, several challenging mandates from the Southern Association and the Texas Coordinating Board began to influence the development of curriculum in higher education. In May 1986, a Committee on Competencies headed by Dr. Richard Oliver, Chairperson of the Philosophy Department, was established at San Antonio College to address three issues: (1) the new Criteria of the Southern Association which requires competencies in reading, writing, oral communications and fundamental mathematical skills for students receiving a certificate or degree, (2) the prospect of a statewide standardized "Basic Skills Test" (the Texas Academic Skills Program [TASP] test that would assess basic reading, writing and mathematical skills for all entering freshman and also require mandatory remediation of any deficiencies in these areas and (3) the Transfer Curriculum Study Committee of the Coordinating

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* Editor's Note: Mary Ann DeArmond leads the very successful QUEST program in faculty development at San Antonio College. She has also served as a consulting advisor for the West Texas Project in Writing across the Curriculum. We asked her to write this chapter to share some of her experiences while she is the middle of helping to implement a college-wide writing-across-the-curriculum-program at SAC. She focuses on problems of faculty development. We thank her for accepting this difficult task.

Board which emphasized the acquisition of reading, writing, speaking, and critical thinking competencies by completion of lower division college work.

The first phase of the herculean task of the Committee on Competencies involved development of Writing Intensive (WI) courses which were defined as course other than English 1301 and 1302, in which a student must write a minimum of 2000 words comprising at least 60% of a student's grade. A student could meet the writing competency requirement in the following manner:

> Programs offering an Associate in Arts or Associate in Science degree may choose between the following options, as they deem relevant to their students, in developing their degree plans:
>
> (1) Successful completion of English 1301 and English 1302 plus six credit hours of WI courses, or
>
> (2) Successful completion of English 1301 plus nine credit hours of WI courses.
>
> Programs offering an Associate in Applied Science degree may choose between the following options:
>
> (1) Successful completion of English 1301 and 1302, or
>
> (2) Successful completion of English 1301 plus six hours of WI courses.

The second major objective of the committee was to review the course syllabi, approve courses in WI, develop workshops, and monitor the implementation of the courses. After careful evaluation, the committee approved 31 courses representing thirteen departments (eight from Arts and Science and five from Occ/Tech) in Fall 1987.

Faculty Development Involvement: Informal to Formal

During all this activity, I became coordinator of San Antonio College's Quest Program, a segment of the Faculty Development Program which investigates and encourages innovative teaching strategies with the philosophy that colleagues are our best resources. From my perspective in faculty development and because of my background in WAC, I began to see a need for a program that would begin to address WAC in some manner. In the Spring of 1987, Quest members met and established a series of eight workshops with the major emphasis on implementing writing within the various disciplines. This group was comprised of faculty actively interested in establishing WI courses and faculty who were simply interested in introducing and/or refining writing assignments in their curriculum.

Twelve faculty members (six from Arts and Science, six from Occ/Tech) met at the first workshop for a general information-sharing, idea-generating discussion concerning what we say as issues that needed to be addressed in order to make effective writing assignments. After much discussion of where we were and where we wanted to be, seven more workshops/seminars were mapped out. Three WAC experts from the community and other colleges were contacted and each presented their WAC philosophy in various ways of integrating writing assignments effectively. Another workshop revolving around construction of essay test item construction with emphasis on Bloom's taxonomy as a means of creating writing assignments that called for more complex thinking skills was also given. Two workshops addressed the problems of the adult learner and an update of the activity of the Committee on Competencies. The final workshop was again a sharing of information. Faculty discussed how the workshops had influenced their assignments that semester and how their curriculum would be affected in the future.

Because the seminar design of the Quest Program is created each semester by the faculty who participate that semester, the major emphasis shifted away from WAC and WI courses. However, because faculty developing WI courses still had unresolved issues and the second objective in the implementation of WI courses was to provide WI workshops, Faculty Development and the Committee on Competencies joined together to create another series of workshops which more extensively addressed WI problems. The workshops revolved around two issues: essay test item construction and grading. Approximately 50 faculty members met away from campus at local hotels for all day sessions. In the essay test item workshop, Bloom's taxonomy was addressed along with what constitutes clear, effective essay questions. Faculty brought essay questions of their own to discuss. During the grading workshop reassurance was given that faculty need not be teachers of English to use writing in the classroom effectively. A brief, concise overview of necessary do's and don'ts of effective communication, developed by Dr. John Igo (English Department), was presented.

Problems in Implementing Writing across the Curriculum Programs

The problems of implementation of writing programs are multitudinous. From my perspective I see them clustered around three areas: those related to faculty concerns, those related to institutional commitment, and those problems specific to San Antonio College. Commitment of faculty to WAC is perhaps the easiest to address because generally those faculty who are most open to change have the energy and optimism most likely to sustain a direction in curriculum change and are the most likely to be willingly involved in WAC. Even with such enthusiasm faculty often have fears that writing in class may present more problems that it is worth and need to be reassured that WAC does not have to be an overwhelming project. Once given an orientation to WAC as a significant learning approach, they then need the reassurance that they do not need to be English teachers to use writing assignments. Secondly, they need to be encouraged to use informal writing assignments and be given assurance of the validity of informal writing assignments which is supported by current research.

The Role of Faculty Development

Faculty development can provide a collegial environment for addressing curriculum development or revision, thus discouraging institutionally dictated committees that are responsible for structuring guidelines and objectives. The free exchange of ideas and information between faculty that is structured by faculty needs is more palatable and productive. Faculty development can provide such a mechanism for WAC through the leadership of a coordinator or a multi-disciplinary committee on writing. Workshops or seminars can be used to spread information and stimulate discussions about successful writing assignments and frustrating problems. Even though some historical and philosophical perspective on WAC is important, an emphasis on the realities of the classroom and not theoretical research is one of the major concerns with participants meeting weekly or monthly. Summer workshops have been effectively designed for faculty to prepare for the year ahead. A WAC library with books and articles on writing assignments and projects specific to content areas should be available to all faculty. The united front that faculty can provide can lead to more administrative support for WAC: writing labs and tutors. Both can be utilized to help those students who need help with basic mechanical and grammatical deficiencies.

Institutional Commitment

Institutional commitment to WAC is evident in memos and newsletters, but financial support is often slow in coming. Administrations are quick to want faculty support for and involvement in current trends in curriculum development but allow a great deal of energy to be expended before showing total administrative support. For WAC to be successful, the institution must be supportive of faculty and student needs and concerns.

Faculty need to have release time or stipends available to them for curriculum development—particularly in community colleges where teaching is the primary mission and teachers carry a five-class teaching assignment. Classes need to be kept small to keep grading and writing assignments manageable and communication flowing. Institutions need strong faculty development programs that have the flexibility and money to set up workshops, seminars and on-going support groups. Institutions need to support a centralization of WAC effort either through assignment of a WAC coordinator or establishment of a multi-disciplinary committee to address faculty concerns.

Students need to have resources available to them to supplement classroom activities. Tutors and writing centers or labs allow an alternate support system for students. Any curriculum program is only as strong as the amount of energy each institutional segment is willing to generate. The sum of the energy necessary to create a good writing across the curriculum program is not as great as the overwhelming positive results of such a project.

Philosophical Differences

San Antonio College is on the threshold of creating a good multi-disciplinary writing program. There exists, however, a philosophical difference in how to approach writing improvement. This is not unusual in any large institution that is as committed to curriculum development as San Antonio College.

On one side we have a writing-intensive program that is very prescriptive and needs to be in order to meet the mandates of governing agencies. Proponents of a prescriptive writing approach support the directions of the competency committee. The committee evaluates each proposed writing-intensive course to ensure that:

1. A minimum of 2,000 words is required.

2. Sixty percent of the students' final grade is based on written assignments.

3. Assignments are structured so that students must demonstrate ability to write with a controlling purpose and appropriate organization.

4. Traditional writing formats are used (the kind of formats the West Texas Project in Writing across the Curriculum has categorized as based on the "academic model"—essay tests, reviews of literature, reports, research projects—see Chapter 1 above).

5. Higher level cognitive skills are required.

The most adamant supporters of this position believe that almost all writing should be graded and highly structured. The benefits of such an approach are that it allows for:

- a demonstratable institutional effort towards meeting state mandates for writing competencies
- an impetus for faculty dedicated to writing as a vehicle to collaborate on common concerns
- a multi-disciplinary commitment to curriculum review and development
- improvement of student writing skills

On the other side there are firm proponents of a less rigid and prescriptive yet viable approach to writing improvement. They see the usefulness of writing assignments for other than evaluative purposes and support a variety of informal, non-academic writing tasks such as journals, in-class response papers, and class summaries. Such informal writing assignments allow the student to realize that:

- writing goes beyond grammar rules
- writing and thinking cannot be separated
- writing serves a practical purpose as a means to learn

Writing assignments help the students overcome their fear of writing and give added confidence in approaching the more traditional writing assignments. (A strong statement of this general position is given by Agnes Robinson in the next chapter.)

Faculty development can provide the environment for both philosophies to exist by providing a program that addresses faculty needs and encouraging faculty participation in faculty development activities. Teachers must be allowed to make writing assignments in the context of their purpose, the courses they teach, the types of students and their teaching style. It is a waste of excess energy to argue the validity of one approach over another. The faculty members' purpose should define the nature of his or her writing assignments. With this philosophy in mind, the means is not important if the end is the same—LEARNING THROUGH WRITING.

Chapter 27

Writing across the Curriculum and the Student in the Two Year College

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One of the goals of writing across the curriculum is to help students to become competent writers in their chosen disciplines and careers, and to become better writers in general. An equally important goal is to help students to become better thinkers and active learners. It is this aspect of writing across the curriculum, often referred to as writing-as-learning, that is most promising in the two-year college setting, particularly for students who are preparing for careers in vocational-technical areas.

Students Enter the Community College Poorly Prepared as Writers

Much has been written about the writing problems of students in two-year colleges. Teachers identify student writing problems as inability to spell correctly, write clear and complete sentences, and communicate what they have learned in a clear, concise way. They also add that they do not know how to study or to think critically. Many of the vocational-technical teachers at my college stress the importance of their students being able to think critically and to write clearly. In some fields clear, concise writing is of utmost importance since records must be kept and these records are considered to be legal documents. Others stress the importance of writing in career advancement. The source of writing and thinking difficulties is often identified as poor training in English and study skills in elementary and secondary schools, and ineffective or irrelevant training in college English classes. Research has shown that there is some validity to the conclusion that students do not develop good writing skills in high school. A study published in 1982 showed that students in secondary general English classes were rarely asked to do extended writing. Their writing experiences were usually confined to writing single sentences, short paragraphs, or answering fill-in-the-blank questions. Students got even less writing experience in their other courses where they were most often tested by objective exams.

Students coming to community colleges have little experience in writing, particularly the kind of writing that requires them to think and to express concepts that they are learning. They have not been called upon to manipulate language as a part of learning. As to the effectiveness of college freshman English courses, research has shown that unless students use the writing skills they have developed by the end of the required freshman English classes on a regular basis in other classes, their writing skills level drops to their entry skills level by their senior year. Inadequate and ineffective training in English classes may be a factor in students inability to write; however, it is not the sole cause.

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* Editor's note: The West Texas Project in Writing across the Curriculum has been fortunate to have had Agnes Robinson of El Paso Community College as a consulting advisor. Agnes founded and has directed the impressive writing-across-the-curriculum program at EPCC for several years now. We asked her to write a chapter that showed how such a program benefits students and how it improves student-teacher relations. The result is a strong statement of the writing-as-learning philosophy, which we think is an appropriate note on which to close our discussion.

Poor Writing Skills and Poor Thinking and Study Skills Are Interrelated

As a novice college teacher in a small liberal arts college, long before I heard about writing across the curriculum, I made what was for me a startling discovery. Because the college was small, I had students for more than one semester, some for courses over four years. I discovered that sometimes the same students wrote well and sometimes they didn't. This was reflected not only in their presentation of content, but in their use of basic grammar and mechanics. In analyzing the phenomenon, I concluded that when students understood the concepts that they were writing about, they wrote clearly and concisely. When they did not understand them, their writing was not only confused and unclear, it was full of the kinds of grammatical errors that they did not normally make. I have also found this phenomenon in the writing of my two-year college students. My readings on student writing problems have confirmed this to be true.

The solution to student writing problems is not to give them more English, specifically grammar courses or to ask them to write more formal reports or research papers. The solution is to integrate writing with learning in all their courses. Students need to be given an opportunity to write about the concepts they are learning while they are learning them. Educational psychologists and teachers who have used writing-as-learning assignments confirm that such writing does help students to learn. Most importantly, students who have participated in classes that incorporated writing-to-learn assignments have attested to the effectiveness of such writing. Writing-as-learning is most effective when it is done with the emphasis on learning, not on "correct" writing. We all know that when we are anxious we are not able to let our ideas flow. As one of my students in Basic English Composition wrote on the first day of class when I asked the class to write on "How do you feel when someone asks you to write?", "When someone asks me to write I worry so much about how to write the sentences and to spell the words, my ideas go out the window."

Why Do Teachers in Areas other than English Avoid Writing Assignments?

In working with teachers at my college on writing across the curriculum, I have found that teachers in other disciplines hesitate to ask students to write for several reasons. They are concerned that students might resent being asked to write in classes other than English classes, they feel that incorporating writing into their classes might take away time that is needed to cover materials that must be covered in a semester, they feel that responding to student writing will take too much of their time, and—perhaps the most frequently expressed concern—they worry that they have forgotten the intricate rules of grammar. A teacher at my college said, "We would ask our students to do more writing if we knew how to explain to them what is wrong with their writing. We don't remember the grammatical terms or explanations for grammatical errors. We only know when something is wrong." In other words, they respond to poor writing on "gut feelings." For the purposes of writing-to-learn it is not necessary to give detailed explanations of grammatical errors. Nor should such writings be graded; it should be looked upon as preparation for the kind of writing that will be graded, such as reports and essay exams.

Generally there are misconceptions among teachers, English as well as others, that writing across the curriculum means "grammar across the curriculum." These misconceptions miss the essential point that *writing is thinking*, and therefore an integral part of learning, and writing is a process. Good writing is the result of writing in stages. These misconceptions are also held by students. Their earlier experiences with writing have not taught them to value writing. English classes are classes that they have had to endure. Their attitudes when they enter English classes are generally negative. On the college level they think of English classes in terms of gathering credits toward graduation and not as developing skills that will enable them to become better learners and better thinkers. Using writing-as-learning assignments can give students a powerful tool for learning and thinking. It can also give students an educational experience that they have never had before, the experience of individualized instruction.

Writing across the Curriculum Can Help the "Nontraditional Student": The Master-Apprentice System

Students who come to community colleges have been called "non-traditional," meaning that they are not the kinds of students who traditionally have gone on to post-secondary education. They have not been prepared for college level courses by going through college preparatory courses in high school. They have not been nurtured and challenged intellectually by creative assignments and concerned mentors. Education has not been personalized and humanized for them. Using writing-across-the-curriculum techniques, specifically writing-as-learning assignments, can help them to such an educational experience. †his kind of experience can be most fruitful in the vocational-technical disciplines.

Non-graded, writing-as-learning assignments can create a unique relationship between the teacher and the student. I am reminded of the master-apprentice systems before the coming of the industrialized age, when the master personally guided the development of a novice into a master craftsman. In most disciplines we do not have the luxury of working with only a few students. We cannot physically oversee the work of individual students as it is being done. We cannot enter into the minds of individual students or assess their thought processes and intervene at early stages when they are operating under misconceptions. However, students writing about what they are doing and thinking can provide us with a means of establishing a master-apprentice relationship. Once students have gotten over their deeply ingrained anxieties that their writing will be used against them as it is in writing that is used for evaluative purposes, once they have learned to trust that the teacher will use what they write as a means of communication to help them to master what they are studying, they will write voluminously about concepts they are struggling to learn.

This kind of writing turns passive students into active students. They assume responsibility for their own learning. It enhances their self image and self esteem and the result is an increase in self-confidence and a willingness to take risks in learning, and to do creative critical thinking. Most importantly, this kind of writing changes the relationship between the teacher and students. The relationship is no longer and adversarial one. The teacher and students engage in accomplishing difficult tasks together and to share with one another the joy and discovery of learning.

Students thrive in this kind of relationship and so do teachers. A few weeks ago I received an entry in a student's research paper journal thanking me for writing in response to her writing about a problem. She wrote, "Thank you for thinking I was important enough to write to." Receiving such a note is rewarding and makes the trials and tribulations of teaching diminish in size. Through writing-as-learning assignments, we touch students' lives in a unique way, and they touch ours in a unique way.